MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000
©1994 BEST BRAINS, INC.
NOW EXCLUSIVELY ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL.
VISIT THE OFFICIAL ONLINE HOME OF MST3K AT THE DOMINION
www.scifi.com
MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000 MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE NOW ON THE DOMINION OR THROUGH THE OFFICIAL SCI-FI CHANNEL CATALOG.
CALL 1-800-59-SCIFI FOR A FREE CATALOG.
I'm Huge!
SCI-FI CHANNEL
U.S. AIRTIME SATURDAYS 4PM ET
CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS FOR SCI-FI CHANNEL IN EUROPE
The Sci-Fi Channel and The Sci-Fi Channel logo are registered trademarks of USA Networks

MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000
© 1994 BEST BRAINS, INC.
NOW EXCLUSIVELY ON THE SCI-FI CHANNEL.
VISIT THE OFFICIAL ONLINE HOME OF MST3K AT THE DOMINION www.scifi.com
MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000 MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE NOW ON THE DOMINION OR THROUGH THE OFFICIAL SCI-FI CHANNEL CATALOG. CALL 1-800-59-SCIFI FOR A FREE CATALOG.
I'm Huge!
SCI-FI CHANNEL
U.S. AIRTIME SATURDAYS 4PM ET
CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS FOR SCI-FI CHANNEL IN EUROPE
The Sci-Fi Channel and The Sci-Fi Channel logo are registered trademarks of USA Networks

MICHAEL J. NELSON, KEVIN MURPHY, BILL CORBETT,
MARY JO PEHL, BRIDGET JONES, AND PAUL CHAPLIN

MST3K
THE SCI-FI YEARS
Episode Guide

Acknowledgments
#701: Night of the Blood Beast
#701T: Turkey Day Host Segments
#702: The Brute Man
#703: Deathstalker and the Warriors from Hell
#704: The Incredible Melting Man
#705: Escape 2000
#706: Laserblast
#801: Revenge of the Creature
#802: The Leech Woman
#803: The Mole People
#804: The Deadly Mantis
#805: The Thing That Couldn't Die

#806: The Undead
#807: Terror From The Year 5000
#808: The She-Creature
#809: I Was A Teenage Werewolf
#810: The Giant Spider Invasion
#811: Parts: The Clonus Horror
#812: The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies
#813: Jack Frost
#814: Riding with Death
#815: Agent For H.A.R.M.
#816: Prince of Space
#817: The Horror of Party Beach
#818: Devil Doll
#819: Invasion of the Neptune Men
#820: Space Mutiny
#821: Time Chasers
#822: Overdrawn at the Memory Bank
#901: The Projected Man
#902: Phantom Planet
#903: The Pumaman
#904: Werewolf
#905: The Deadly Bees
#906: The Space Children
#907: Hobgoblins
#908: The Touch of Satan
#909: Gorgo
#910: The Final Sacrifice
#911: Devil Fish
#912: The Screaming Skull
#913: Quest of the Delta Knights
#1001: Soultaker
#1002: Girl in Gold Boots
#1003: Merlin's Shop of Mystical Wonders
#1004: Future War
#1005: Blood Waters of Dr. Z
#1006: Boggy Creek II: And the Legend Continues...
#1007: Track of the Moon Beast

#1008: Final Justice
#1009: Hamlet
#1010: It Lives By Night
#1011: Horrors of Spider Island
#1012: Squirm
#1013: Diabolik

Acknowledgments

I made this book so that it would be easier for MST3K fans to read these wonderful, hilarious episode commentaries. It's all available on the web and as PDFs of the web content, but reading PDFs on your phone is a pain in the ass. This book is not intended to be sold.

The content for seasons 8-10 was saved by me directly from the Sci-Fi channel website. I checked it against what's currently posted at www.mst3kinfo.com, and made spelling and formatting corrections. I also regularized the entries so that they all have the same structure. The content for Season 7 was copied from *The Amazing Colossal Episode Guide Season Seven* at www.mst3kinfo.com*.

All content for Season 7 is copyright © 2001 by Chris Cornell and Brian Henry.

All content for Seasons 8-10 is copyright of the respective authors.

Keep circulating the tapes and ebooks!

- *LT*

* The copyright notice there says "Please do not reproduce this guide or any portion thereof in any form without express written permission from the copyright owners." I wrote them to get permission, more than once, but never received a reply. I tried!

@lenetaylor

Chapter 1

#701: Night of the Blood Beast

Short Summary (*Once Upon A Honeymoon*): Up in heaven, some officious administrative angels send their stupidest worker, Wilbur, down to earth to help a young married couple do something, though we know not what. After snaring himself in their aerial (holy doesn't necessarily mean bright or nimble) he sprinkles dust on them, causing the wife to prance around re-imagining her kitchen while her painfully plain husband chain-smokes and attempts to write a Broadway show tune. There are phones in it, too, and they seem to play some sort of role, though the makers won't come right out and say what that role is.

O.U.A.H. was directed by Jerry Fairbanks, the same disturbed mind that brought the short *Century 21 Calling* to chilling life. In his fevered brain is obviously an ever-changing collage of horrors, with industrial Orwellian visions competing with those of sexless, obedient, and energetic women, who in turn are mixed up somehow with thin-waisted male choreographers who occasionally toss them around various dark landscapes. Still, some of his dance numbers are peppy.

Movie Summary: Like 78% of the films shown on MST, this one starts with a rocket crash. Whichever branch of the government owns the rocket (it appears to be a sort of cut-

rate NASA) sends a flatbed truck out to the crash site. They discover the pilot dead, though the air bag must have deployed because his body is completely intact. The investigator at the scene, Steve, sums up the crash: “He came down pretty hard.”

Like 84% of films produced by Roger Corman, this quickly turns to one featuring gray men talking flatly in a gray office. The twist is that they all appear to be named Steve. There are some women there too, but their roles are kept to a minimum to avoid sparking any unnecessary interest or character interaction. Gray men talking is mission number one.

The pilot Steve, it turns out, is alive after all, resuscitated by a stowaway alien so that he might impregnate him with #12 size salad shrimp.

During some talking, of which there is much, one of the characters holds up a small chunk of something gray and says, “Take a look,” to which Crow responds, “This was in my tuna.” Later, while comforting a grieving young woman, an older doctor in scrubs says to her (courtesy of Servo), “You know, my gown opens from the rear.” (I laughed at these, so many years after having taped the show, my memory of having done it long since shot.)

Back to the plot: The talking stops momentarily when the titular beast kills the old doctor and hangs him upside down. Why? We don’t know, nor do we ever really find out, though later the monster mumbles something about having the essence of Dr. Wyman inside of him - yuck!

Like roughly 93% of all films from Nicholson/Arkoff, this

one ends up in a canyon just outside of Los Angeles. The beast, who is now hiding out there, begins to talk to the humans using the voice of what sounds like Fred Travalena impersonating Humphrey Bogart. He explains rather patiently how the humans are ungrateful, having not thanked him for killing their friend and impregnating another. They tire of his talk and, like roughly 47% of Americans, instead of negotiating, throw Molotov cocktails, burning him to death.

Host Segments

Prologue: Fearful for their personal safety, Crow and Servo carry taser guns and peppercorn mace. When Mike makes the subtlest of moves toward Crow, he spears him with the taser. Servo, confused, fires on Mike as well. Then, per Crow's instructions, Servo blasts Mike with nearly a liter of mace (which looks suspiciously like Silly String).

Segment One: Pearl, Dr. Forrester's mother, is staying with him. Wearing an ill-fitting suit, his hair slicked horribly to one side, he announces that she is forcing him to play a recital on his trombone. He tries to object but she correctly observes, "Nobody wants to hear you talk, Clayton." He makes a hideous sound with the trombone and his rhythm is terrible, prompting Mother Forrester to hit the bell of his trombone repeatedly with a ruler.

On the SOL, Crow demonstrates his own technique by playing a lovely, melodic version of "Getting Sentimental Over You" (which sounds suspiciously like it was being played on a Roland effects box).

In Deep 13, Forrester blows out more than a gallon of spit from his spit valve while Mrs. Forrester ponders the failure that is her son. She admonishes him, calling him by his full name, Clayton Deborah Susan Forrester and wonders why she didn't have the girl she prayed for.

Back of the SOL, Crow effortlessly plays a spunky version of "Hold that Tiger," and they head into the theater.

Segment Two: Gypsy does her best "Mary" from the short, singing about things that she wishes she could have. The robots, dressed as angels, deliver the goods, even as they get more difficult. Includes a very nice "fly-over" from Tom, which, while taking up less than a second on screen, most assuredly took more than four hours to shoot.

Segment Three: Mrs. Forrester interrupts Mike and Servo while arm wrestling to announce that Clayton has something to confess to them. He doesn't have the foggiest idea, but makes a few guesses at it before asking, reasonably, "Is it poop related?" The whole thing is embarrassing and leads to a fight wherein Clayton pulls a knife on his beloved mother. She wastes no time, producing a semi-automatic pistol and shooting glasses. She expertly blasts the knife from his hand and when he starts running she leads him beautifully and puts a few rounds into him. Where, we never find out. I would guess they are leg shots.

Segment Four: Crow has determined that pregnant women get all the attention and that life must be a piece of cake for them. He attempts to trick the others into thinking he's pregnant (like Johnny, from the film) by taping some peel-and-eat shrimp to a phony fluoroscope. They find him out

and he delivers a stinging indictment of pregnant women everywhere. In it, he refers to their “ever-widening a**es.” Wow.

Segment Five: Crow goes after babies, angry that they too get a free ride. Mike reads an overwhelming amount of letters. Down in Deep 13, Mrs. Forrester cradles Dr. F like a baby, and in fact, insists that he is one. It is deeply disturbing - or at least, it should be.

Reflections: This was our first show after having shot *Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Motion Picture* or as I now call it, *The Life-sucker*. It was a great relief to be back doing a show that took roughly two weeks as opposed to one that consumed two years of our lives and involved more pinched executives than you could shake a stick at. It is a lesson for all of us: Never bring something you love and care for to a behemoth corporation and allow them to punch it and kick it and insult you and laugh at you and ignore you and rob you - even if they do occasionally provide you with fresh cold cuts and a cheap commercial plane flight.

I do remember feeling in my bones when we started on season seven that it was to be our last. Comedy Central ordered seven shows and didn’t return our phone calls. There was a slight sense of insecurity but that was swamped by feelings of freedom to be back doing a project that was largely in our control. I remember laughing like jackanapes while writing the segment in which Trace tries to think what offense he needed to apologize for. We could all easily dredge up some shameful act and I believe that those he

mentions are all based in reality with one writer or another.

There was also a sense of excitement at having Mary Jo on the set. We were certain that as talented as she was, she was sure to be a good measure better than the last replacement the show had made.

A note of trivia: I had by this time spoken to Jack Perkins now and again and had been e-mailing him about the upcoming Turkey Day, hoping to get him on the show. He wanted to do it and thought that something could be done when he came to visit his son, Eric, who is a sports reporter for KARE 11 News here in the Twin Cities. It never came to be, but I remember feeling slightly sheepish about telling Jack that we were depicting him as a drunk who was hitting on an androgynous pan-being named Mr. B Natural. By that time, I felt that the "character" Jack was so far removed from the actual Jack that it would be fine, but since I haven't spoken to Jack since, I'll never know. My guess is that it went by unnoticed by Jack - not to mention the large majority of the world - and that he is right at this moment pulling a leather-bound volume of Proust from a mahogany shelf in his library having never given it a single thought.

The memory I will take with me from this whole show is that of Trace in the writing room doing his killer Charles Nelson Reilly whenever the angel in *Once Upon a Honeymoon* appeared onscreen. If he had done it 4000 times, it wouldn't have been enough for me.

- Mike Nelson

Chapter 2

#701T: Turkey Day Host Segments

For me, all appearances on the show were preceded by a frantic search for a baby-sitter. I had a regular sitter for the days that I worked (which were the three writing days) but anything beyond that involved a lot of juggling. I enjoyed playing characters on the show but it was really much easier not to. However, the Turkey Day episode was different. My sister offered to let the boys stay with her overnight so I wouldn't feel stressed if things went overtime.

Kids smothered in love at Auntie's, I was free to concentrate on becoming freakish man-woman Mr. B. Natural. I think Mr. B's costume was one of the first that Beez McKeever designed and made. The boots, I recall, had to be spray painted to match the aqua jacket. I especially fell in love with the treble clef belt buckle! That outfit actually made me feel "like a happy king!"

As the season began, I missed Frank. I missed him as a friend and I missed the sweet floppy TV's Frank. So I was pleased when we hit upon the idea that Frank had invited all the guests to the party. And, the fact that Mother Forrester liked Frank more than her own son seemed to me to give the transition just the right note. For as much as I missed Frank, I was thrilled about Mary Jo's debut. I just knew she was going to be great.

Writing for Pearl was fun because of the newness of it and

because Mary Jo laughed so hard at ideas for her in the writing room. The scene where everyone is lined up at the table and Pearl prays as if she were General Patton particularly cracked me up, even into the shoot day. In fact, I think I blew one take with anticipatory laughter. Trace was immediately up to speed with Forrester's newfound hen-peckedness, and writing ideas for Pearl and him were abundant.

The matted *Kitten with a Whip* costume grossed me out, much to the delight of Kevin. The way he swaggered around as that character made me laugh, but I honestly could not look at that costume (which was a rental) without thinking about the dozens of drunken Halloween parties it had endured and all the damp places it must have been. None of this seemed to bother Kevin and, as I said, he enjoyed my aversion.

I distinctly remember being very disturbed by Pitch's beard, but can't recall why.

Mike and I had a good time playing opposite each other. In one scene, Jack Perkins lays a big kiss on Mr. B. Mike had these big fake teeth in, and instead of kissing, we actually just clanked teeth, cutting my gum slightly.

The whole Perkins-Mr. B romance idea was arrived at quite soon after deciding to have all the Thanksgiving guests. Everyone must have liked the idea a lot, because it actually made it through the whole writing and editing process. I'm glad it did, because Mr. B was my favorite character to play. The only thing I disliked about the character was the spray used to turn my hair lighter. It was paintlike, and after

drying would break off in tiny shards and fall in my eyes and sting.

It really was a fun time on the show. The movie was over and we were back writing what we wanted to write, so we wrote everyone into the show! Jim was even in it as Michael Feinstein's back. I remember thinking, during the final scene where all the guests lay dying, that I was pretty lucky to have such a fun job with so many great people.

- Bridget Jones

Chapter 3

#702: The Brute Man

Short Summary: *The Chicken of Tomorrow* is an intensely detailed look at chicken-raising, circa 1942, courtesy of an outfit called The Texas Company. The filmmakers dazzle us with futuristic gadgetry like incubators and henhouses and chicken-sexing-by-hand, not to mention the successful dividing of 210 by 70 - leading to the implicit execution of a hen, by the way. Yet slipped in between all the wowee chicken stuff, there are at least a dozen hosannas directed at "the motor truck." Without the motor truck, all chicken ranchers everywhere agree, it would be ridiculous to even consider raising chickens. You might as well just give up and go back to eating dirt.

Movie Summary: Mountain-faced Rondo Hatton is "The Brute Man," d.b.a. "The Back Breaker" and then most tellingly "The Creeper," once a football star at Hampton College, a tiny, expensive New England school filled with the not-so-brilliant children of the fading Protestant elite. Brute's real name is Harold Moffat. As the film opens, we see him murdering a series of college types - an elderly professor, a coed inside an attractive sweater - and we learn (as he murders some more) that Brute was always a jerk. But since he was "the best football player Hampton College ever produced," he was very popular. In fact, he was even part of a "popular trio," according to an old newspaper photo he carries around. Not a singing trio, just three

popular people. This was a period when newspapers didn't have as much to write about, apparently.

Brute's rash decision to murder a peeping delivery boy really brings the heat down on his massive head, though, and, as the cops close in, the story becomes clear. Years before, back at hazy Hampton, Brute was involved in a romantic triangle - actually, he was involved in a crude attempt to horn in on his best friend's girl, Virginia. Said friend, a Thomas Dewey look-alike named Clifford Scott, got back at hapless Brute by giving him the wrong answers to some chemistry homework. As a direct result, Brute had to stay after class the next day. He was made to mix dangerous chemicals in front of a picture window, forced to submit to the smirks of Clifford parading back and forth outside, squiring Virginia, headed on home to do God knows what.

Brute's rage is perfectly understandable. But he channeled it by mixing some chemicals badly, causing an explosion that zeroed in on his face, turning him into The Brute Man.

And now he's back, picking off people he blames or who get in his way: Various members of the Class of '30, professor Cushman, the delivery boy, always with his trademark technique of strangling from behind. Given his flounder-like hands, it's a good choice of method.

He also befriends a blind young woman, briefly, although he's about to kill her, too, when he's finally caught in a trap and killed. Are we supposed to feel sorry for him? Kind of, not really, it's unclear, although the blind woman does, and you have to respect the opinions of blind women in a case like this.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo's on the phone, buying a duplex in Philadelphia with the help of an agent named Sherrie. "Points? Are those good? Sure, I'll take a few." Mike reads the income projections and tells Servo he'll be losing $2,000 a month; Servo says he'll write it off his income, Mike points out he has no income. "So I'll income average!"

Segment One: Mrs. Forrester has a date, and she leaves Crow in charge as babysitter. Crow flaunts his authority - "Go to bed now and don't wake up or I'll put your hand in the garbage disposal!" The date, a sport-jacket gigolo named Sandy, leers at Pearl for the benefit of son Clayton, and leaves with a lurid "Poom!" and suggestive fist-thrust. Dr. F: "Oh well, he's not the first oily man who's taken Mom to the mat."

Segment Two: Servo puts himself into a large egg, surrounded by warm nutrients - "I want to experience the miracle of chicken birth, Mike." Mike objects, picks up the egg to get Servo out and drops it - sploosh. Crow: "Oh, ick - I'll go get a whole lot of paper towels."

Segment Three: Mike calls an old girlfriend, Carla, to tell her of his being trapped in space, and to get some help. "Miiike! How are youuuuu!" She puts her little boy, Matthew, on the phone, and there follows a disjointed infant-style conversation. Servo, impatient to hear from Sherrie, breaks in and instructs Matthew to hang up, prompting the lad's only discernible words: "Oh, okay, bye!" Click. Oh, is Mike mad.

Segment Four: Crow is thrilled by the similarity between the names "Tom Dewey" (whom one of the characters resembles) and "Tom Dooley" of folk song "The Crimes of Tom Dooley" fame. He explains his point with posters and other visual aids: "What if instead of singing 'Hang down you head Tom Dooley,' you went ahead and sang 'Hang down your head Tom Dewey?' Not Dooley - Dewey? Let's try it."

Segment Five: Amid letters, duplex-owner Servo gets a phone call from an irate tenant. "What do you mean I'm already on the *Village Voice* list of the top ten worst landlords in New York? It's in Pennsylvania!" In Deep 13, Pearl and leering, triumphant Sandy reappear. Clay gives Sandy a potion that turns him into The Chicken of Tomorrow.

Stinger: The murdered delivery boy's extremely crotchety boss: "Creeper, creeper, creeper - *you give me the creeps*!!"

Reflections: I didn't remember this until I just watched it again, but on sketch-writing day the partners were all out in LA, meaning Mary Jo and I had to come up with all the sketch ideas and write the first drafts. That may explain why I am simply everywhere. I'm Sandy. I'm the voice of the little boy Matthew during the phone call. The realtor's name was my realtor's name. Quite shameless, really.

The Sandy character became pretty famous around the shop, particularly the breathy, repulsive exhalation I produced (as Sandy) when ogling my date: "Pearl, you look - hhaaagghhhh!!" I don't know where it came from. I don't

where it is now, for that matter.

One detail I omitted from the movie description is captured in the stinger - the old, crabby store-owner. We're introduced to him and his delivery/whipping boy during a five minute scene, a scene of nothing but unexplained rage and hatred directed at this soft, gentle-mannered lad, whose only sin is natural curiosity about the murders in town. It was one of those moments when a movie threw us such a great set-up: Why is this guy so mad? It makes no sense, it's just an attempt at some liveliness, and its illogic was perfect. Our comment as he looks at a newspaper: "God is dead? Good!!"

Oh, as was the case with many, many of our movies, this one is dark, as in you often can't see much of anything. I would say it was made in the days before lighting, but does that make sense? No.

Rondo Hatton the actor had acromegaly, the disease that enlarges bones in the hand, feet, and face. That fact opens up a large irresolvable issue concerning the movie industry's use of this poor afflicted fellow; he was paid, after all, and movie work is nice work. Yet it can seem exploitive of misfortune. One thing's for sure: Rondo makes a great Brute Man.

- Paul Chaplin

Chapter 4

#703: Deathstalker and the Warriors from Hell

I didn't remember how exquisite this movie was. Seeing it again brought genuine tears to my eyes, primarily because I was trying to gouge them. John Allen Relson plays Deathstalker this time out; a bony, annoying little sucker with a rictal smirk and no lips to speak of (or with), who believes that his meat and two veg, as they say, are the greatest in all the land and women must just take a number and line up, legs akimbo. They don't, they aren't, and he isn't, but it only adds to the fun. Deathstalker's friend, the wizard Nissius, or as they call him in the movie, Nssissss, paws at suspected princess Carissa, who carries a magic stone. The three of them meet at a Renaissance Festival somewhere in Mexico, and are attacked by an army led by a guy in a bat helmet. I couldn't make this up if I was tripping.

Carissa, who truly runs like Natron Means, succumbs to Deathstalker's pledge to protect her, but only after he has rubbed his groin on her a lot. Then of course, Deathstalker blows even this simple task and the princess is hacked to death. Leaving him to find the Princess's sister, try to bag her, and help her to become the richest chick in all the land.

Along the way, Deathstalker is vexed by the Troxartis, far and away the stupidest character and most extravagantly overacted role in MST history. Played by Thom Christopher,

who played the role of Hawk on the TV series *Buck Rogers*, he is incompetent in every way available to an actor. Perhaps his sense memory exercises only evoked images of wood-smoked ham. He constantly overacts, tries to steal every scene he's in, dresses like Rosalind Russell and performs the worst stage fighting I've ever seen on film.

Then there are the Warriors from Hell, ugly snot-eating day players, whose souls are kept in a grappa bottle in the castle bar. They are bound by threat of eternal damnation to kill Deathstalker, but decide instead that he's a stand-up guy and help him vanquish the evil Troxartis. Eventually all the characters are crushed by the weight of Thom Christopher's overacting, and he must die so the film can end. And he dies a classic villain's death: A magic lozenge causes his head to explode.

It's the perfect MST film, one that fails on every conceivable level, fails so miserably it transcends failure and becomes a thing of sheer delight.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow enjoys his active lifestyle...with his new hair! It's a techno-weave, and although he looks more like Marv Albert than ever, he can swim, play tennis, even swim! That should have been enough but then he wows us with calf implants.

Segment One: Pearl is sick, and when Pearl is sick, Clayton suffers. On the SOL, our pals do what they do best in situations like this, and dress up in funny fast food worker costumes and ask pointless food service questions with no

object, such as “Do you want to super-size that?” and “Is that together?”

Segment Two: The ‘Bots, hoping to fleece poor dumb Mike, come up with the perfect ploy: A Ren Fest! Lots of fun to be had as long as you have the money! Several lame gags and Elizabethan insults later, Mike is tapped out, and runs for the cash machine.

Segment Three: Proving even further how dumb he is, Mike insists that the ‘Bots let him pay them more money to do an even lamer feint at a Ren Fest, which he just loves.

Segment Four: Crow looks in on sick old Pearl and humors her by reading her filthy cheap airport-bookstore-style erotica. She relishes it as if it was a new translation of Proust.

Segment Five: In Deep 13, Pearl moans and groans at a fever pitch, and Clayton, borrowing from the classic scene in *Suspicion*, brings her a glass of poisoned milk, but then he pulls the old switcheroo and drinks it himself! Ha ha! He’s dead!

Stinger: Filthy peasant woman says, “Potatoes are what we eat!” in a way that just sells the line.

Reflections: I remember Mary Jo cracking herself and the rest of us up by continuously chanting from her sick-bed, “Claydin? Claydin? Claydin! Oh, Claydin!” Over and over and over and over again. Just like that: “Claydin? Claydin? Claydin! Oh, Claydin!” Just like that, on and on, for hours. “Claydin? Claydin? Claydin! Oh, Claydin!” See how funny it is? “Claydin? Claydin? Claydin! Oh, Claydin!” See? The

more you say it, the funnier it is! “Claydin? Claydin? Claydin! Oh, Claydin! Claydin? Claydin? Claydin! Oh, Claydin! Claydin? Claydin? Claydin! Oh, Claydin!” Man, it still gets me.

But I suppose it’s less funny in print, isn’t it?

As you might guess if you’ve watched more than one episode of *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, many of us involved in the writing of the show hate Renaissance Festivals to the point that we have wished dire harm on their participants and patrons, written letters to wit, received court orders enjoining us from stalking around them, been incarcerated for lighting fires in the bazaar and hurling flaming dream-catchers at horrified festers.

Well, that describes me to the letter.

“Creative anachronism” my sorry Irish ass. A Ren Fest is nothing more than an excuse to be lame, smelly, and fat, just like XFL fans, only worse. I’m betting most of these clowns couldn’t spell “renaissance” if you threatened their tender vittles with hot iron. I hope some day they live out their wish to know what it was like back then by contracting plague.

Too harsh? You go to a Renaissance Festival and get back to me.

- Kevin Murphy

Chapter 5

#704: The Incredible Melting Man

Gabe Kaplan is an astronaut and he's somehow irradiated during a failed space mission. I don't really get science and stuff but the movie suggests that he contracts enormous amounts of radiation by looking at Saturn. (It didn't seem like a big deal at the time - all he got was a nosebleed.) Back on Earth he's hospitalized and bandaged from stem to stern, looking like a giant *papier-mâché* hot dog. He wakes up on the wrong side of the bed, peels off his bandages to find that he's been burned to Original Recipe Extra Crispy. Man has begun to Melt, though not yet Incredibly. Somewhat upset, he escapes from the hospital. At the warehouse/hospital, Drs. Mod and Groovy are concerned. Dr. Groovy, a.k.a. Ted Nelson, goes searching for his friend, the eponymous Incredible Melting Man, so as to conduct more tests on his liquefaction problem. In a subplot, Dr. Ted confides in Dr. Mod that his wife is pregnant (Ted's wife, not the other guy's. That would be really weird if your male co-worker confided in you that your wife was pregnant). This is all very hush-hush, top secret, on the Q.T. and the floppy-faced general to whom Dr. Ted reports wants it kept that way. Meanwhile, IMM is on a killing rampage in the hills of greater Los Angeles. While Dr. Ted Nelson creeps through the dry underbrush with a Geiger counter, he finds gooey bits of astronaut snagged on trees: A piece of pizza on an

evergreen turns out to be Incredible Melting Man's ear. In an ironical visual statement, we are treated to bucolic shots of IMM romping through the L.A. hills in slow motion as he has an aural flashback to the doomed space flight.

IMM's melting spree continues, and Dr. Ted Nelson's involvement with the case really puts a strain on Dr. and Mrs. Dr. Ted Nelson's already boney marriage. Things get really awkward when IMM kills Mrs. Dr. Ted's mother and her new boyfriend (the mother's new boyfriend: That would be really weird if Mrs. Dr. Ted Nelson had a new boyfriend, considering she's still seeing her husband). By this time, the General has arrived at the Nelsons' house to hang with them, and when the mom and her squeeze don't show, Dr. Ted suspects the worst and goes out looking for IMM, leaving the General in charge of the missus and the refrigerator. Although IMM's condition grows progressively melty-er, he manages to maim the General, attack a white trash couple, a bunch of hobos and, with Dr. Ted and a generic sheriff on his trail, he's finally chased to a nearby refinery. In a dramatic, gooey confrontation, Dr. Ted refuses to shoot his friend, thereby saving possible future victims. So the sheriff shoots IMM, it really stings, and IMM is enraged and tosses the sheriff into a power line resulting in a human fireworks display. When Ted Nelson pitches off a landing, he is able to hold on with just one hand high above the empty parking lot. He begs IMM for help and the gentle melting giant pulls his friend up. The cops show up and not only shoot IMM but Dr. Ted as well (what? Is this New York? Ha! I tease over-zealous murderous police!!). The weakened and puddly IMM drips down like a chianti bottle

candle. The next morning, a janitor listens to a radio broadcast of another space launch while he unknowingly cleans up the disgorge that IMM has become. As Crow put it so well, how many monster movies end with a janitor scooping up a monster into a garbage can?

Host Segments

Prologue: In honor of the fall classic, Mike et al. play ball in the SOL. He gets beaned in the noggin with a wild pitch. Et al. charges the mound and there's a fight in the infield.

Segment One: Mike nurses his injury. Dr. Forrester and Mother Forrester announce to Crow that a studio has bought his screenplay, *Earth Vs. Soup*. Clay and Pearl declare themselves in charge of the film. The budget is a measly 30 million, of which Crow gets $800 to shoot his film, and the studio insists on Kevin Bacon for the lead.

Segment Two: Mike assumes the role of Kevin Bacon for the movie, and the Forresters are aboard the SOL for a script run-through. Updated script pages are exchanged, and the meeting is over.

Segment Three: And...ACTION! An unctuous, inept Crow flails at directing his first feature film, yelling out "Judy! What am I doing?!" at every turn. It's a wrap after two or three seconds of film are shot.

Segment Four: Dr. Forrester conducts a focus group for a screening of *Earth Vs. Soup*. Nobody likes the plot, except Doug, who thought it was too short.

Segment Five: Studio execs Pearl and Dr. F break the news

to Crow that *Earth Vs. Soup* is going to be released as a trailer - but only if Crow's name is removed as director. Crow is understandably upset.

Stinger: The flappy elderly people crying out, "Let's get the hell out of here!"

Reflections: Good god, we watched some wretched movies. This is another one of those movies where we were hostage to watching Rick Baker's protracted, masturbatory special effects. I can't help but feel that most, if not all, of the melting scenes were shot in the dark for a reason.

Nevertheless, I thought this movie was really progressive, ahead of its time really, for several reasons: It featured an African-American doctor before television tokenism really took hold; the nurse is a person of size who is also a health professional and is not simply in the movie to be the butt of fat jokes (except ours). Never mind that she freaks out at the first sign of pus - hey, big girls get upset and queasy too. And it portrays the underclass as fighting against the tide of unrelenting economic forces - okay, maybe I'm reading too much into the symbolism, but the white trash girl fights back against IMM, chops his arm off and saves herself. It also portrays elderly people having viable, amorous relationships. An unpleasant thought though it may be, the movie puts it out there.

The host segments were an exercise in healing after our struggle to make the *Mystery Science Theater* movie. It was a difficult process, and not really fun at all - working with the studio and all the attendant politics and creative roadblocks

was really, really frustrating. We didn't have the freedom to be as irreverent and eclectic as we were in the TV show. We had to work with people who had silly names that they had made up for themselves. I remember at one point, while the studio shepherds in charge of *MST3K: The Movie* were in Minneapolis, it was during the height of the ubiquitous O.J. Simpson deal. The studio exec informed us over lunch that there was a big trial in Los Angeles with O.J. Simpson because he'd been accused of murdering his wife, and "had (we) heard anything about it out here?" It was like a hog-pile on our souls.

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

Chapter 6

#705: Escape 2000

I love Dablone.

Be that as it may, it's spring cleaning in the Bronx! In this poorly and partially dubbed Italian film, squads of militia men in silver sauna suits are roaming the Bronx very politely asking everyone to please leave the Bronx, gently urging them on with bullhorns and guns and flamethrowers. Everyone is to be relocated to the lovely Southwest, but, in actuality, everyone's being killed. It's all part of a plan to create a utopian New York, "a perfect ordered civilized metropolis," by eliminating urban blight and undesirables and putting up a lot of Starbucks. This is all engineered by the evil GC Corporation, which is in cahoots with the mayor of New York to develop the land and make a shitload of money in some shady dealings. (Yes, my friends, it was the filmmakers' cynical 1980s view that by the year 2000 government and big business would be corrupt. How sad.)

The "Leave The Bronx" campaign is headed by a ruthless, nasty Henry Silva as Wengler (who could have played the guy who played Bo in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) who refers to the project as a "de-infestation," perhaps a satirical comment on corporate-speak used to mask the most heinous of actions. But perhaps I give the movie too much credit. I love Dablone.

But they didn't count on Trash. The Bronx is controlled by street gangs and Trash is a leggy, long-haired Gino Vanelli-Valerie Bertinelli crossbreed who refuses to leave the Bronx.

The militia find Trash's parents - who also refuse to leave the Bronx - in their dilapidated, rat-infested apartment building (what? and leave all this?) and toast the parents but good. After Trash discovers what's left of his parents, he heads underground to a secret lair of the lusty, livin' large, phat Dablone (a.k.a. Toblerone) and his assortment of *Fame*-dressed characters living on the fringe of society. These theater majors plan to kidnap the president of GCC with the help of a feral-looking reporter who they hook up with.

Since Trash is in way over his head, he has to subcontract out to a guy named Strike. Strike has an adorable, ruffian 6-year-old child who's a munitions expert. I love Dablone. The movie hints that Strike and Ferret-lady have had a previous relationship, and when they're on screen together you can just feel the electricity. No, wait, I'm thinking of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall - no, wait, I'm thinking of Leona and Harry Helmsley.

Anyhoo, during a groundbreaking ceremony for a new hospital, the gang creeps up out of the sewer to kidnap the president of GCC. Ferret gal gets mortally killed during the shootout. Meanwhile, Wengler is still trying to get the Bronx de-infestated and during another confrontation, the president guy escapes. In a shocking plot twist, Wengler finds him and shoots him. Turns out it's all a big dirty double-cross, and Wengler was hired to kill the president by the vice-president of GCC. Wengler goes a-spreeing with weapons in hand, and finally it's a showdown between Wengler and Trash. The wily, street-smart Trash blows up Wengler's van, and peace is finally restored to the Bronx. If there's anybody left alive, they no longer have to leave the

Bronx. Strike and the kid urge Trash to come back underground with them, but Trash, in a touching gesture of his faith in humanity, declines. I love Dablone.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow has an auction to raise money for a good cause - really sad kids with hurt puppies or the hungry rainforest. The first item on the block is a penny, which fields no bidders. Crow finally sells a dollar for seventy-five cents.

Segment One: Crow tries to burn an ant with a magnifying glass with the sun at just the right angle with a pile of oil rags nearby. The SOL bursts into flames and Gypsy - good ol' Gypsy - puts out the fire while the rest go into the theater. In Deep 13, Dr. Clayton Forrester has had to put Mother Forrester into a home. It's a really little home right in the middle of Deep 13 itself.

Segment Two: After the mayhem of the fire, Crow tries biofeedback, which Servo dismisses as a bunch of hoo-ha. Crow's tension melts away, and the biofeedback machine shorts out, igniting several spontaneous fires on deck.

Segment Three: Men's night on the SOL. Crow is thoroughly flummoxed.

Segment Four: On the SOL, Servo is feeling a bit under the weather. Forrester has decided the show needs an adorable kid to boost ratings. Paul Chaplin is brought in as Timmy Bobby Rusty. The ratings plummet instantly.

Segment Five: Servo helicopters in while Mike reads letters.

Down in Deep 13, it turns out Dablone lives right next door and he comes to whisk Mrs. Forrester away.

Stinger: Dablone spits. How I love him.

Reflections: I love Dablone.

There was a time when we actually read letters at the end of the show. That convention gradually trickled away and none of us missed it. The letters were difficult to write around and got in the way of having any momentum in the last sketch.

Having lived in New York for almost a year at the time of this writing, I watched this film again through a new prism. I feel quite strongly that they should rather de-infestate Soho or the Upper East Side or Staten Island. I also loved it when all the militia are on a city street and they go down one of those metal cellar doors in the sidewalk that are storage cellars for businesses up above. Those cellars are stocked full, so there's very little room. I imagine those guys packing down the stairs, trying to get out of the way as more of them keep piling in, in their bulky silver suits, after some poor bodega owner finally agreed to let them use it to shoot their silly movie.

I loved Dablone, and I don't care if the whole world knows it! Ah, but that was a time in my life when I had a thing for big, fierce, brown-eyed, curly-haired, lusty, kind of scary marginalized Bohemians with sexy accents. Do you know how hard those are to find in Minnesota??

- Mary Jo Pehl

Chapter 7

#706: Laserblast

(Note: *Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide* gives *Laserblast* two-and-a-half stars. Was he, or one of his editors, thinking of *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, or *Rio Bravo*? We'll never know.)

A guy with a green face has a thing on his arm, so some shell-less turtles in a spaceship start shooting at him. (I can only guess that "so," and not "and," is the conjunction I'm looking for in this case. There appears to have been some causal connection between the two events.) Because of that, a young, supernaturally unappealing kid who looks like Lance Kerwin with swollen eyelids wakes up with a start and, consequently, his mother, who is thin and that's about it, leaves for Acapulco. That event, it seems, causes the puffy-lidded ur-Kerwin to drive to an insane Keenan Wynn's house and make him angry. Therefore, (I think) two cops sit on a dirt road smoking weed. This in turn causes Kerwin Man, who they call "Billy," to drive by in excess of the posted speed limit, causing the bulbous cracker cop to issue him a THC-induced ticket. He drives to a gas station and is soon accosted by Eddie Deezen and his friend, or business partner, or realtor, or Amway sponsor (it's not made clear which it is). Because of Deezen's teasing, Billy drives into the desert and looks around. He soon finds the discarded "thing" that the green-faced guy dropped when he was incinerated by the space turtles. He picks it up and, like any red-blooded named-Billy-person, begins pretending it's a

gun, mock shooting and saying “pow-pow!” and “Dow, da dow pow!” (Pow? Obviously, he momentarily forgot that he wasn’t playing one of Sister Woman’s brood in a bad 1959 community theater production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.)

Upon finding a necklace near the site, the laser cannon, as the thing turns out to be, begins to work, so he blasts saguaros for a while, still making a “pow” sound even though the laser cannon is producing its own superior version. Soon, in a scene which takes up only four or five minutes of screen time, but expands, like one of those paper-thin sponges that blows up on contact with water, to 478 hours, his thin Sondra Locke-ish girlfriend looks for him. Frankly, the scene should have been trimmed to 344 hours and perhaps given a point. After finding him, though, something quite unbelievable happens - they go to a dull party, and stay there for 6,803 hours, every second of it filmed. After his girlfriend is roughed up by Deezen and friend at the party, Billy does the honorable thing and hangs around, skulking in the bushes like a coward, until his nemeses leave and then attempts to murder them with his new found laser cannon. He only manages to blow up their car, which causes a severe Bill Bixby-type fellow in a Botany 500 suit to drive into town and investigate.

This causes (again, I think) the stupid stoned cops to share a breakfast burrito. Billy, meanwhile, develops what doctors refer to as an “extremely gross chest hole” and so visits Roddy McDowall, even though he is not explicitly playing a chest hole specialist. Roddy digs around the kid’s bad chest make-up and fishes out something hard, so Billy lies in wait for him that evening and murders him, again, with his laser

cannon.

Bill Bixby-guy investigates about as competently as a guy in a tan synthetic suit can, but he's coming up with far less than Bill Bixby's *The Magician* would have in similar circumstances!

This causes (now I don't even know what "this" refers to) Billy to make love to his girlfriend, if that's what you call what he does to her, and then turns green and scares her. Bill Bixby-guy goes to Keenan Wynn's house while Eddie Deezen and pal drive around and Billy shoots a pinball machine and runs into the desert where he shoots some guys in a plane and murders them.

Deezen and his patent attorney (or friend - never explained) drive around a lot, so Billy stumbles onto the road and murders them. (This is, ostensibly, our hero here doing all the unwarranted murdering, even though it is never even hinted at that possession of the laser cannon causes such behavior. No, this is all Billy, our scrawny, Lance Kerwin/ Shawn Cassidy/Christopher Atkins lead, whom we're supposed to like!)

Soon, a hippie van driver picks him up and helpfully offers to drive him to his desired destination, so he murders him. Suddenly and with no connecting scene, I swear, Billy is on some deserted back lot shooting things. The turtles come and kill him.

Things left hanging:

1. Who the Hector P. Valente is Keenan Wynn supposed to be playing, how does he fit in and why? (or where? Or whatever?)

2. Who is the Bill Bixby guy and why?
3. What was the chest hole and when?
4. Who were the turtles and why a duck?

Answer to all of the above: *Laserblast* was not a blast of any kind, and did not live up to its two-and-half star Leonard Maltin hype.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow and Tom tie up Mike so that they can deliver an elaborate joke that culminates (sort of) with the punch line, "Come on, can't we just get beyond Thunderdome?"

Segment One: Dr. Forrester loses his funding (he had funding?) and so unceremoniously cuts the SOL loose of its umbilicus. It will, he points out, drift through the endless void of space and probably fall into a black hole, where all will die horribly. He really seems quite unconcerned about it, despite having been slavishly devoted to this experiment for seven years, seemingly expressly and maniacally bent on world domination. Still, I suppose, no fund-y, no world domination-y. He tells them he plans to move in with his mother to "save scratch." (His mother, by the way, has turned momentarily into a "virile female," as the cigarette marketeers like to say.)

Segment Two: A "Nomad-type" satellite, one of the many that buzz around the cosmos demanding perfection from their hapless victims, comes aboard the SOL. They toy with it mercilessly, getting it to whining pretty heavy, before tossing it casually out the airlock. (There's an airlock? Paid for by Dr. F's "funding," I guess.)

Segment Three: They run into a field of, I don't know, "grazing" star babies and one of them grabs the SOL and won't let it go. It is determined that he has a dirty diaper, so Crow and Servo are shot out the airlock (they have one, remember?) to change it. With Mike instructing them from within - wearing a vest now, chain-smoking and slurping old, bad coffee, assuring them that failure, which might seem to them like a perfectly viable option, is not one, in fact - they manage to finish the messy space diaper change-out, and are momentarily (for three movie segments) safe.

Segment Four: As predicted, they do manage to drift near a black hole, and that is not good. Only a calm, clear-headed Mike can save them from imminent matter-collapsing death. He shows up dressed as one of the more famous fictional female starship commanders and, after uttering a bunch of space nonsense, he saves them and celebrates by singing an obscene version of "Proud Mary." (Yes, I know, they're all obscene, and this is simply one of them.)

Segment Five: They arrive at the edge of the universe and turn into pure energy (or something pure, they never really say what), which looks suspiciously like some small, gel-covered hand-held lights being reflected by a beam splitter. Dr. Forrester, in the meantime, is having a meal much like a lunch one might expect to have at a *2001: A Space Odyssey* theme restaurant. Soon, and probably inevitably, he sees himself as an old man, transforms into a star baby and is plucked out of the air by mother Forrester who says, "Another chance to do it right. Isn't it wonderful, baby?" The baby, instead of saying, "Ga," or perhaps, "Blllrr," responds by saying, "Oh, poopie."

Reflections: This was our last show for Comedy Central, though I honestly don't remember if we knew that going into it. I can only guess that we did, seeing as CC gave us a pretty good clue by only ordering six shows for season seven. A six-show order is, I believe, referred to in the business as "a pink slip."

Despite imminent unemployment, we had fun with this episode, and I was finally able to fulfill my lifelong desire to dress up as Kate Mulgrew (a.k.a. Mrs. Columbo). It is a small comfort to me that no matter how talented the make-up artist, how good the costume, how expert the lighting, I don't look anymore like a woman than Fred Gwynn does, without make-up.

As far as the prologue, with the "beyond Thunderdome" joke, was this perhaps an excuse for us to clear out one of those writing room jokes, where, whenever someone tossed out a movie joke that made reference to that film, another writer would stand up and confront her, saying, "Now come on, Mary Jo, we've been through this - can't we just get beyond Thunderdome?" Perhaps it was. Okay, not perhaps. That's precisely what it was. Having the robots tie up Mike so that they can deliver their bad joke: Pretty cowardly, I know. But it got it out of our systems. Until the next pervasive writing room joke came along. Probably the one where a writer turns to another one out of the blue and says, "Oh, shoot. I'm sorry - I didn't mean to turn you on."

Trace as the old man in the final segment was in fact Trace's "old man," Jack Beaulieu, a very nice, quite dignified fellow

who, though always enthusiastic about our doings, seemed appropriately perplexed about what it all might mean. That's why it was such a coup to have him on the show. It was, for us, like getting Alistair Cooke or something - finally, a touch of class around the place.

- *Mike Nelson*

Very funny movie. There were a lot of highlight moments, it seems to me; I used to love it when we were presented something like the deputy who (in our minds) resembled Hank Williams Jr. That gave us the ideal chance to beat the "ready for some football" line into the ground. If you did it right, that sort of thing wasn't boring; it could become more funny as it went along. Did we do it right here? I'll leave that to the judgment of history.

One of my favorites, over a shot of the deputy looking disgusted: "Well, just another example of a citizen who isn't READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL!"

And then a little twist: "Well, I gotta go, all my rowdy friends are coming over tonight."

The main thing I think about when I consider the end of the Comedy Central years is the departure of Trace Beaulieu. Trace is one of the most charming, generous, funny people I've ever known. When the last show was done, when our little endeavor seemed, in fact, to be all over, he gave me a postcard I still have on my fridge. It's a wonderful photo - from maybe the 1920s - of a race car driver in one of those old bullet-style cars. He's on an old dirt road, some sparse

audience visible in the background; he's looking over to his left, his hair blown back in an image simultaneously of speed and comic surprise; and what he's seeing is his left rear tire, which has just left its axle and is bounding by him on the road.

It's a sublime moment of "Hey, what the -!!!" On the back, Trace wrote that it sure was nice working on the puppet show with me. And it was, too; from my end, doubly. Thank you, Trace.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Memories light the corners of my mind. I was asked to share my reflections on Episode #706, and Chris and Brian sent me a tape to review. I had a vague recollection that I had watched thousands, perhaps even hundreds of miserable movies during my tenure at MST, and *Laserblast* sounded somewhat familiar. You could have told me that we had done a film entitled *Martians From Manila* and that would have sounded vaguely familiar too. That's how trauma works. Your mind blocks it out so you can go on with your life. It was not until I actually saw *Laserblast* again that it all came back to me...misty watercolor memories.

Did anyone notice that this was a really, really bad movie? The lead guy, Kim Somebody, is another sterling example of how filmmaking is not a meritocracy. The fact that this film was even made proves that "anybody can do it." You can find this either inspiring or depressing.

And the Mike-as-Captain-Janeway segment...oh, dear. I was unable to look at Mike in that costume (actually, I was

never allowed to look at him; he wouldn't permit it). Yet I couldn't not look at him. Mike is a very masculine man sort of guy person, and it was very unsettling to observe him out of character, yet still in costume. I can vividly recall him standing around the craft services table on shoot day, wig and boobs on his very mannish body, with its mannish walk and gestures, discussing baseball with Kevin, Paul, and Jeff Stonehouse, all with a disconcerting nonchalance. It was a severe bout of cognitive dissonance.

Jeff Stonehouse, videographer, dear friend and all-around great guy, loved the challenges that segments like the last one presented. Having Mike and the 'Bots turn into pure energy, and thus little colored light beams, was painstaking. Until Stonehouse came on board, the camera work was pretty perfunctory and we were locked into our low tech. As for the Deep 13 part of the last segment, we had a lot of conversations about doing multiple camera angles and watching it now, used as I am to the single camera shoot, it's strange to see. But I think it reflected - as did the material itself - how everything was up in the air for MST at that point.

Roderick McDowall was in this movie. I can't think about that too much. Not because I'm stupid - although that does play a part in it - but I have loved Roddy McDowall since I was 13 years old and I don't want to consider the possibilities of why he may have had to do this movie.

At one point during the Sci-Fi Channel years, we had Leonard Maltin as a special guest on an episode. Mr. Maltin is a walking warehouse of film and Hollywood knowledge, and he's great fun to talk to. I got the chance to ask him if

he'd ever met Roddy McDowall. He said yes, that he knew him, and that Roddy McDowall was one of the last, true gentlemen of Hollywood. When McDowall dies, Maltin said, all of Hollywood's secrets go with him. McDowall died later that year.

And that was Episode #706 of our truncated season. We had no idea of what the future was for MST. I went to Los Angeles to be in a play, and my compeers worked on other projects for Best Brains, which unfortunately never came to fruition. Memories may be beautiful and yet, what's too painful to remember we simply choose to forget...*Laserblast*. So it's the laughter we will remember, whenever we remember, the way we were.

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

So there we were, eating a cake shaped like the MST logo and drinking as much Summit Pale Ale and Sam Adams as we could put down. This was it. After seven seasons, one hundred twenty-eight shows (correct me if I'm wrong), two live shows, a convention, three agents, four network presidents, two entire network ownership shifts, two major cast changes, endless awards, accolades, press junkets, Penn Jillette, lawsuits, upheavals, pain, agony, joy, heartburn, cigars, alcohol, and approximately seven hundred and fifty-three billion occasions for laughter, we were eating logo cake and emptying beer bottles.

It had been the best experience of my life. And I was determined not to tamp it down and head out to LA to become a development whore or sit in a room writing bad

comedy for someone else. Living in Silver Lake, throwing pencils at the ceiling with a bunch of goateed Harvard losers and grinding away on the next episode of *Monkeyshit Follies* was my idea of Hell.

I had already decided to stay, because I have a soul, and souls don't grow "Out There," as William Goldman calls it. I got into television because I loved creating stuff for it, not because the money was good or I thought L.A. was "neat." I'd rather stay here and get a job scraping zebra mussels off the hulls of fishing boats.

So I had already made up my mind that I would remain. I would hold my days at MST among the best of my professional life, and look back fondly while moving forward and beyond. And we still had some work to do and a place to do it. It would be a long dry spell, for sure. But then one day we found out about a lovely man named Barry Schulman who lived in a cable network in midtown Manhattan...

- *Kevin Murphy*

UNIVERSAL – INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS
REVENGE
OF THE
CREATURE

Chapter 8

#801: Revenge of the Creature

In this sequel to the superior *Creature From The Black Lagoon*, the Creature - or, as he is officially known in the movie, the "Gill Man," is captured from his beloved swampy home and taken to a depressing Florida aquarium. There he is subject to research (actually, thinly-disguised torture) by a scientist with a hideously phony laugh, played by John Agar. John is assisted by Lori Nelson (no relation to Mike Nelson, more's the pity), pretty and charming but hardly believable as a prominent ichthyologist, being as she's only about eighteen years old. Wouldn't you know it, the creature escapes the minimum-security fish tank where he's being held, and stalks poor Lori Nelson, with whom he is smitten. In the end, a posse of cops and locals - who have for some reason ceded complete martial law authority to Agar - track them down, save the wet girl, and shoot the Creature for no good reason.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike, Servo, and Gypsy return to the Satellite of Love from the edge of the universe, where they resume their corporeal forms. There they discover Crow, who has been living there for 500 years. He doesn't remember Mike. They seem to be orbiting Earth, however. But when they contact the planet, a bespectacled-and-lab-coated ape answers.

Terrified screams ensue.

Segment One: Mike and 'Bots learn that it's the year 2525, and that apes have becomes the ruling species on planet Earth. They (and we!) are introduced to Professor Bobo and his assistant Dr. Peanut, who bring them up to speed and proceed to send them a cheesy movie. When the Satellite asks why they are still being subject to crummy movies, the apes reply simply: It's ape law, given to them by the Lawgiver.

Segment Two: Mike and Servo try to repair the Satellite, to get away from this ape world. Crow introduces them (and us!) to the Nanites, microscopic robots who might be able to repair the ship. The Nanites immediately eject Servo from the ship's works, sending him rocketing up into the air.

Segment Three: A fierce alien - half-man and half-octopus - comes pounding on the SOL looking for Servo. Servo apparently did business with him on the edge of the universe, and has something this angry alien wants. They talk in alien-ese for a while, and when the alien threatens to vaporize the Satellite, Servo gives it over. It's a cask of French vanilla pudding, apparently very valuable to the alien's race. Servo brags to Mike that he had all sorts of harrowing adventures while traveling the universe, but when Mike asks for specifics, Servo advises Mike not to worry his pretty little head about it.

Segment Four: Crow and Servo sit catching up over cups of delicious coffee. When Mike enters, Crow decides he wants to get to know the "new guy" and offers him a complicated coffee drink from his huge and unruly espresso maker. After

battling the machine, Crow hands Mike an extremely tiny cup of caffeinated beverage.

Segment Five: Searching the databanks, Mike and the 'Bots learn the true reason for the simian takeover of earth. It turns out that Mike's descendants recklessly intermarried with many species of monkey, causing a quick evolution to the apes who just sent them the movie. Needless to say, Mike isn't pleased. The apes call them: Apparently their revered Lawgiver wants a word with them. Turns out it's none other than Pearl Forrester, who was cryogenically frozen for 500 years, thawed out by the apes, and immediately crowned their Lawgiver. It was she who sent them the movie, and she vows to dog Mike and the 'Bots to the bitter end, carrying on the work of her son.

Reflections

A new season, a new network, and many changes. I was a rookie - or as my fellow writers put it, "new meat." Though I had written for MST3K on a few episodes towards the end of Season Six, this was my first show as a full-fledged, full-time Best Brainer. Little did I know what else would come my way: I was asked to provide the voice of Crow, replacing the brilliant and justly beloved Trace Beaulieu, part of the Mount Rushmore of MST3K, who had decided that he wanted to move onto other things. Honored and thrilled as I was to be the Gold One's new alter ego, I was given this job on the show on the Friday before the Monday we started production on Episode #801. And I think maybe - just maybe - it showed in the puppeteering for the first few

episodes, especially this one, where Crow seemed to have suffered a stroke during the 500 years he hung out on the Satellite.

This show also began MST's happy 3-year affiliation with the Sci-Fi Channel, as well as an entirely new fiction to the show. This was born out of necessity, since Trace was moving on. We first batted around a number of ideas, including replacing Crow with a new robot. That was ultimately something no one could imagine, but many other radical changes - Ape World, Pearl Forrester in pursuit, Nanites - were introduced here, and lots of other new stuff would be coming up. Though everyone here missed the old characters and elements, I think the new direction energized us. And the movie segments - the bedrock of the show - remained the same as ever. And that, I would contend, is a good thing.

- *Bill Corbett*

Chapter 9

#802: The Leech Woman

This is a tender story of a man who despises his wife because she is perhaps slightly older than he'd like her to be; and the woman who downs hooch like Dylan Thomas because her husband despises her so much. It is also the story of an ancient woman from an unnamed African country who has found the fountain of youth coursing through the pineal gland of the male of the species. Further it is the story of the weenie lawyer with whom our heroine falls in love, and his weenie fiancée whose only redeeming quality is that she packs a Colt Panther. This sweeping epic takes us to a modest ranch home in, perhaps, Elmhurst, Illinois all the way to Griffith Park in LA, which completely and altogether passes for the breathtaking Kalahari. Along the way we see our white heroes immediately assume superiority over an ancient tribe, we see our heroine stabbing at the bases of skulls of countless men, we see that alas, the fountain of youth is always out of order and prone to backfiring, and that to be not beautiful and extremely young is to be hateful and evil. A lesson for our time. Highlights include several examples of the spiral cup bra.

Host Segments

Prologue: Intrepid Crow, worried about the Satellite's prairie dog problem, purchases a "Varmint Vac," which helps to keep the ship's beefalo herd from breaking their legs in prairie dog holes. Mike seems surprised that the

Satellite has either prairie dogs or beefalo.

Segment One: At the urging of Mike and the 'Bots, Bobo, Peanut and their entire staff revert to their monkey-nature, wearing diapers, smoking huge cigars and roller skating, which we all know are natural and instinctive simian urges. Pearl, the Lawgiver, arrives in time to put a stop to it and hands out plenty of baby wipes.

Segment Two: In a stirring and poignant scene, the Nanites organize and strike against...well...other Nanites, I guess, who seem to be their hard-hearted job bosses. After stirring speeches, the labor dispute is settled in the tradition of American free enterprise, with tanks and guns.

Segment Three: With the apes beginning to suspect that she may not be the Lawgiver, Pearl enacts some important laws, such as "no parking on Sundays" and "no soup with buffet." Servo reveals the seedy side of his missing five hundred years roaming the universe, which may or may not include several stops at peep shows. You be the judge.

Segment Four: Crow and Servo, enlightened by today's film, conspire to puncture Mike's pineal gland and extract the precious juice so they can live forever. They get really cheesed when Mike survives the assault, and they turn to Gypsy, proving once again that they haven't a clue.

Segment Five: Tom Servo, obsessed with screaming "Jeeeeeeeddddddddd!" at the top of his lungs, dresses as Irene Ryan in her epic role and forces Crow and Servo at gun-point to play-act *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Naturally, it backfires; naturally, Servo cries.

Reflections

I put it to you that it is well known that monkeys, apes and in fact most primates fling their poop, sometimes with considerable verve and with the style and accuracy of a Dennis Eckersley. But it's just not a proper topic to bring up in a family show like ours. So we continue to wrack our brains to demonstrate this tastefully.

A word about monkey makeup: Imagine having latex house paint smeared all over your face, on your teeth and in your eyes, then highly toxic industrial adhesives applied, then an entire warm rotting beef liver pressed into the inch-thick layer of glue, then a wig made for a ten-year-old child squozen onto your skull, then being adorned with several layers of thick wool clothing before walking out into a stifling studio filled with ten-thousand watt lights so it's the temperature of a Kenner Easy-Bake Oven. Now, act! And be funny, dammit!

Oh, I'm not griping. I mean it's a great role and a lot of fun to do. But my skin does have the texture of a cantaloupe. Okay, I guess I am griping.

- *Kevin Murphy*

Chapter 10

#803: The Mole People

Smiling idiot John Agar takes Hugh Beaumont and Nestor Paiva beneath the surface of the Earth so that they have no place to run when he begins his windy pontificating through his muscled pie-hole. There they find Alan Napier and other thin men living out their sad existence in pleated skirts. Though aggressive at first, the pigmentless dress-wearers are cowed by Agar's mighty flashlight and shown the secret of their slaves, the Mole People. Actually, it's a matter of some controversy whether the mole creatures or their masters are the eponymous ones. Both could be considered "Mole People," as the former are indeed "moles" of a sort and the latter live among them - "Mole People." I became distracted by this and don't remember the rest of the movie, though I think Agar and friends escape. Without Nestor Paiva, no big loss.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow claims he's a space child because he has replaced his normal inanimate eyes with glowing balls. His "Supreme Leader" orders him to enslave Mike, Tom, and Gypsy, but he can't get it together and naturally, they remain un-enslaved.

Segment One: It's Lawgiver Daze! Pearl Forrester forces her simian charges to honor her with lame floats and lifeless parades. Professor Bobo, uncomfortable doing any of it,

ends up kneeling before her begging to be killed. I think we've all been there! The SOL has been ordered to make baked goods for the event. Servo goes over board, making way too many funny sounding, ethnic folded pastries. Crow makes a mile-high meringue pie that is actually a mile high! Believe it...or not.

Segment Two: Mike goes about thinking he's funny again by dressing up as the "Gesture Professor," a strange character from *The Mole People* who is not only mostly bald but dabbles in weird gesticulations, a deadly combo. The 'Bots have to talk Mike down. It's sad.

Segment Three: Servo tries his hand at a Gordon Lightfootian sea epic, but can't get his guitar in tune. Sounds like a thin premise until you actually see the sketch. It's dynamite!

Segment Four: Crow, in the spirit of archeology (if there is such a thing) digs through the crust of the Satellite and finds evidence of an earlier "him." Crow's weird.

Segment Five: Mike pops the floorboards and finds a couple of "Pale Day Players," as we call them, creatures who live beneath the surface of the Earth. On Earth, the apes give Lawgiver the gift of a mute hunk named Howard (played with chilling accuracy by Robert Smith, not of The Cure but of the Minnesota Vikings. I've been this close to him and he's quite beautiful. More about that below).

Reflections

Robert Smith is a gorgeous man, better than myself in nearly every way, I think. Chiseled from Florentine marble,

smart as whip, rich as Croesus, strong as bear, the ladies love him. Me? Chiseled from sourdough batter, smart as a rod puppet, strong as a gopher, rich as a novelty salesman, the ladies whisper amongst themselves “who is that icky guy?” Still, I have...oh, who am I kidding? There’s nothing to mitigate it.

Actually, it was great fun to work with Robert, our only celebrity guest, to date. Now we just have to get Jack Perkins on the show.

- *Michael J. Nelson*

Chapter 11

#804: The Deadly Mantis

This is one of those movies that is archetypal for our show: An insect grows to Brobdingnagian proportions because of nuclear or atomic radiation. William Hopper (a.k.a Paul Drake from *Perry Mason*) is a noted entomologist sent to an army base at the North Pole to investigate. He brings along his photographer lady friend, she falls in love with the guy in charge of the army base, and they all get attacked by said giant - and deadly - mantis. For some reason, when insects get enormous, they also have some sort of vendetta against humans. We have yet to do a movie in which a giant insect is giant and lives peacefully side by side with humans. Sure, there might be some friction over a gardening implement borrowed and not returned but they work it out. Or at least a giant anything who just minds his own business and doesn't get in anyone's way. Anyhoo, the deadly - and giant - mantis gets trapped in a tunnel in New York and is killed. Guy and Gal are in love; Gal gives up her silly old career to be Mrs. Guy. And Bridget and I agree that Paul Drake is fine!

Host Segments

Prologue: It's casual day on the SOL. Crow and Mike refuse to participate. The high-strung Servo gets upset.

Segment One: Some neighborly mutants drop by Ape World to drop off a doomsday bomb for Bobo, Peanut, and Pearl.

There's some trouble getting it to detonate so Mike helps them out. All assumed dead.

Segment Two: Mike and the 'Bots conduct a rather brief and empty memorial service for Pearl. Suddenly Pearl shows up - with Bobo in involuntary tow - and is in mad pursuit of the SOL.

Segment Three: Mike, Crow, Servo, and Gypsy drive long hours into the dark night of space, trying escape Pearl. The only thing they can get on their radio are AM country stations.

Segment Four: Servo drives for a spell, hits a creature, brings it on the SOL to revive it, and it eats Crow in a demonstration of affection.

Segment Five: Crow makes a meat loaf. The gang receives a letter from Peanut, who is alive after all, and doing quite well in Wisconsin. Pearl, with her unwitting accomplice Bobo, remains in hot pursuit of Mike and The 'Bots. Bobo wants to stop for sweet corn.

Reflections

In host Segment Five, Kevin, playing Bobo, and I had to switch places when I allow him to drive. I have a problem laughing during takes in the first place, and this was a really difficult scene. The cab of the VW is small in the first place, and I'm not, so it really cracked me up to be trying to switch places with this gorilla! For that day I learned to forgo the notion of personal space.

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

Chapter 12

#805: The Thing That Couldn't Die

Her husband having committed suicide (one presumes), a viciously greedy widow named Flavia (?) raises her dim daughter Jessica on an arid southwestern ranch. While out "dousing" for water one day, the comely Jessica stumbles on an ancient box, buried back in the long ago times. Nasal Flavia keeps bleating about "traysure," but instead the box contains the goateed head of a not-to-be-trusted Englishman. With the unwitting help of some dude ranch guests (did I mention Flavia also runs a dude ranch, and employs rock stupid criminals?), said head is freed from his box and uses about 14% of his other worldly powers to mind-control the majority of this wretched crew. Within minutes he is connected to his also-buried body and is then knocked over and dies. Alternate title: *The Thing That Died*.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo, working with funds provided by a grant from Crow, produces fearless art that does not hold back in its relentless attack on Crow. Crow attends Servo's gala show opening and remarks that it all seems kind of negative. "Oh I suppose you'd like me to paint dogs playing poker," says Servo; Crow is enthusiastic and provides another grant.

Segment One: The SOL is pulled untold light years at an impossible speed toward an unknown planet. There they meet the "Observers," three guys who have evolved beyond language and brains who talk a lot and carry their brains in pans. Pearl and Bobo are there, of course. Pearl: "Hi, Nelson - what do you think of these characters - pretty evolved, huh?" The Observers simply wish to observe Pearl's ongoing experiment.

Segment Two: A thin condescending observer appears in the SOL, to observe. He's pretty annoying. "I am certain," he says of Mike from a distance of an inch, "that we shall find him to be an animated piece of refuse, or feces..." Mike and the 'Bots get fed up, hit the Observer with a clown hammer, put him in a bag, and send him back to the planet.

Segment Three: The Observers, displaying a skill remarkably like a trait found on planets in certain episodes of *Star Trek*, are able to create whatever Mike is thinking, only they get it wrong. Their first manifestation is Finnegan, the Starfleet Academy upperclassman who tormented Kirk so. Finnegan leaps, laughs, and pummels Mike, while an Irish tune gaily plays. Mike tries to think of Adrienne but mistakenly thinks of the Emperor Hadrian (who pummels him) before finally settling on Ms. Barbeau (who pummels him).

Segment Four: Crow produces a Civil War documentary, at once elaborate and hastily thrown together. Reminded that Ken Burns has already made the ultimate Civil War documentary, he's resolute: "Oh, but was it about the Civil War?" It's an instant classic, combining Crow's huge ambition with his innate inability to really work at

anything. “The Civil War was a war that took place during a certain period in our nation’s history. When, exactly? No one can say…”

Segment Five: An excited Servo, mimicking the movie, demands that Mike hold his head by some hastily-assembled hair so that he can terrify and mind-control Crow. Unfortunately, Mike knocks Servo’s head against the desk and sends it flying, leaving him holding only the sad wig. Crow’s not frightened.

On the Observers’ planet, Pearl and Bobo prepare to retire for the night. There is only one bed; Bobo quickly realizes his horrible mistake in presuming to settle in ahead of Pearl. Under her withering stare, he straightens the blankets, fluffs the pillow, leaves a mint, and heads outside to sleep on the ground.

Reflections

Stupid people: That’s who seem to populate most of our movies, and if ever there were an exception this is not it. Of course you’ve got your obviously stupid people, like the great lunk Mike whose mind is first controlled by the dead Englishman, yet there’s a straightforward honesty to his stupidity that is refreshing in comparison to the more aggressive variety displayed by his boss, the dry and greedy Flavia. Every character in this movie, each in his own special way, is stupid, including the evil Englishman (the guy who couldn’t die who dies) and the dim fellows who originally cursed and buried him.

Am I being unfair? No.

- Paul Chaplin

Chapter 13

#806: The Undead

This cinematic slop, directed by Roger “Gets Far More Respect than He Deserves” Corman, has a former student returning to his teacher at the “Institute Of Psychical Research” (yeah, right) to prove that he has surpassed this ex-mentor, who bears an unfortunate resemblance to Mel Cooley of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. Apparently tutored by mystics in Nepal, this weird and disturbing younger psychical researcher endeavors to regress a streetwalker - whose time he has quite appropriately paid for - through her past lives. The point? Who knows. Ask Roger Corman.

Anyways, this woman-of dubious-virtue from the 20th century soon regresses to medieval France, where she is now a young maiden falsely accused of witchcraft and scheduled to be beheaded the following dawn. From there ensues one of the most baffling narratives ever created by man, an unnecessarily complicated tale involving witches; imps (an imp, more specifically, played way over the top by small-person actor Billy Barty); an annoying gravedigger named Smolken who constantly sings lame songs about death, corpses, rats, etc.; an extraordinarily fey Satan in a Peter Pan hat; and all sorts of time travel nonsense and reincarnation bunko. In the end, the over-ambitious young 20th century psychical researcher gets trapped in this medieval kingdom, which is the size of an 10’ by 15’ movie studio. Oh yeah, and the 20th century prostitute attains virtue and wisdom because - oh, frankly, I don’t know.

Again, I refer you to Mr. Corman. I wish I could provide his home number.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike tries to sum up the adventures of himself and the 'Bots since being brought back to the SOL, but Crow and Servo insist that he supply more background information to put it all in context. Mike winds up regressing back to a temp job he once had, where some bad memory distracts him and makes him mumble frighteningly, in a bitter reverie.

Segment One: The Observers administer an intelligence test to Mike, the 'Bots, Pearl, and Bobo. No one scores very high at all except Servo, who does extraordinarily well. In fact, he scores higher than one of the three Observers did. Servo modestly insists that he just "tests well."

Segment Two: Servo is missing from the SOL. Turns out he's down on the Observers' planet, where he's been invited to become one of them. But he quickly proves that he doesn't belong there: He can't read any mind but his own, the "brain" he carries is actually an olive, and to boot, he steals their silverware. After a hearty chase, the Observers return him to the SOL.

Segment Three: The sultry witch from *The Undead* visits the Satellite, and finds that her shape-shifting talents are a bit rusty - out of control, in fact. She involuntarily metamorphoses at a furious rate, becoming a cat, a lizard, and a series of other animals and inanimate objects, really tiring her out. She's stuck in the guise of a bottle of Clorox

bleach when Mike and ‘Bots must return to the movie.

Segment Four: Mike finds an old album from his collection featuring Digger Smolken, the singing gravedigger from the movie. Smolken reinterprets modern and classic songs with his signature style, changing all the lyrics to sing about death, corpses, filth, rats, and all that other neat stuff.

Segment Five: Bobo, in his jammies, gets up for a midnight snack. He prepares himself a sandwich with loving attention to every detail, but mistakes the Observers’ brain enrichment chamber for a fridge. And - of course - proceeds to include one of the Observers’ brains on his beautiful sandwich. He discovers his mistakes when each bite produces a scream, and he quickly tries to rectify his error, crudely taping the brain back together and scurrying back to his room with a jar of mayonnaise (mayo-NAISE!).

Reflections

This movie sat on all of our heads. The plot’s logic defies any amount of painstaking analysis, even that involving elaborate flow charts and hired consultants from the most respected universities and think tanks in the country. Next time you have the notion to defend Roger Corman as a good director, watch this movie and repent.

The host segments were good fun, though the rather short segment involving Bridget as the shape-shifting witch from the movie took a long time to film, since by Best Brains standards the shape-shifting effect was mega-high-tech.

Most of us had loads of good clean fun singing many of our favorite songs à la Digger Smolken, with lyrics given his

patented rat death-coffin-etc. reworking. A notable exception to this was poor Mary Jo, who found this avenue of humor extremely painful from the get-go. And yet this only encouraged us to continue it for countless weeks. Is it any wonder why she often talks longingly of becoming a novelist?

Lastly, most of the movies we do on the show provide us with at least one moment that especially sticks with us. These moments usually crystallize in an instant just how dopey the movie in question truly is - they are often those inexplicable, just-what-the-hell-could-they-possibly-have-been-thinking moments which are dumb even by the standards of the movie itself. In *The Undead*, there is a quick moment towards the end where the entire cast of characters is warning the young heroine to either go to her death, or not (to even try to explain it would require a page of calculus). Corman uses quick cuts from head to head, each character advising her, in effect, to go or not. There is one quick shot among these of the time-traveling psychical researcher who started this whole thing, yelling "STAY!" with such baffling vehemence, his face contorted in what looks like sick rage, all the while wearing a silly faux-chain mail knight's hood, which cracked us all up again and again. Even as I write this months after, people are still walking around the Best Brains office suddenly yelling "STAY!" at the top of their lungs with no warning. It's very funny - I think. Maybe you had to be there.

- *Bill Corbett*

TERROR
FROM THE
YEAR 5000
Preser d by
JAMES H. NICHOLSON d SAMUE ARKOFF

Chapter 14

#807: Terror From The Year 5000

Craggy jarhead and former High School football coach Doctor Robert “Bob” Hedges receives a gift in the mail from an his old friend Dr. Earling which turns out to be highly radioactive. Meanwhile, in the fetid swamps of Northern Florida, doddering Dr. Earling, his daughter Claire, and her excessively oily fiancee Victor have created a time machine which can bring knickknacks back from the future. Leathery “Bob” arrives and questions the veracity of their experiment, which causes Victor to secrete unguents at an alarming rate. Oh, “Bob” immediately hits on Claire, which for some reason causes tension between him and Victor. This goes on for a while, and somehow several of the characters strip down to swimsuits, baring their milky translucent flesh, and go romp and play in the nearby reeking backwater. The increasingly whiny and oleaginous Victor manages to use his time machine to summon a human from the year 5000, the above-named Terror, who in a gesture of good will rips the face off an unsuspecting nurse and hits on Victor, accidentally irradiating the poor dope. Saponaceous, stupefied Victor, buttery emollients now streaming freely from his every pore, agrees to go into the future with this murderous woman and sire her children. The whole mess ends quickly when the time machine goes ker-flooey and Victor and his new-found love go up in a smoky grease fire.

I guess they tampered in God's domain er sumphin'.

Leering caretaker Angelo rounds out the cast.

Host Segments

Prologue: Having recently acquired a parka, and taking his cue from winter garment catalogues, Tom Servo combs the Satellite looking for things to "comfort-rate": A basketball, bologna, you get the picture. Turns out he's not very good at it, and he cries.

Segment One: The Observers are fed up with Pearl and Bobo, and decide to dissect them. But first, in true *Star Trek* fashion, they force the two to do battle, apparently to the death. Pearl is armed with a deadly double-bladed karanku, and Bobo with a sea snail.

Segment Two: The Observers send the Satellite samples of their highly evolved food, which comes in the form of pills. Of course, you don't eat one, you have to eat bowl-full after heaping bowl-full, so really what is the point, I mean if you're going to have pills and all, it's kinda stupid to...you know...have to...eat...lots. Anyway, Mike manages to make a gourmet delight by crushing them and making them into patties, in another hilariously food-based comedy gem, from us to you.

Segment Three: Crow volunteers to hop in Mike's freshly built time machine and go back to tell Mike's family that he's all right. Crow does go back in time, and spends eleven wonderful years with Mike's family before he returns, but he had such a darn good time that he plum forgot to tell them about Mike. And he hits on Mike's old girlfriend, Ginger,

whom Crow calls “Ginger Sa-NAP!”

Segment Four: The Observers, intent on demonstrating their musical prowess, favor us with an old chestnut called “When I Held Your Brain In My Arms.” It’s a delightful little ditty, although when they sing, the Observers sound a helluva lot like Servo covering the Ink Spots.

Segment Five: To teach the rascally libidinous Crow a lesson, Mike sets his time machine to summon the radioactive and deadly Terror from the Year 5000! To be Crow’s blind date, and everyone has a good laugh and learns an important lesson.

Reflections

I really like the Observers a lot. How often do you get to write for characters who talk like Jeremy Irons, sing like the Ink Spots, and carry their brains, unguarded and vulnerable, in bowls? One of my heroes, Arthur C. Clarke, has often contended that a culture of sufficiently advanced technology would seem to us indistinguishable from magic. If this is true, then perhaps Galileo, upon seeing our modern age, would think of us all as wizards. The only thing Mr. Clarke doesn’t take into account is how incredibly stupid any creature might be, no matter how advanced. We try in our own humble way to offer this alternate perspective. I hope some day that Mr. Clarke might watch our little puppet show, have a good laugh and perhaps, quoting Puck, cry “Shall we their fond pageant see?/Lord what fools these mortals be!”

Hell, who am I kidding?

- Kevin Murphy

Chapter 15

#808: The She-Creature

Filmed in Depress-o-Vision, this talkie follows the exploits of the wholly unappealing, ineffective psychic, Dr. Carlo Lombardi, who has been dipped in oil. Lombardi uses his vanishingly small talents to hypnotize a woman into conjuring a feminine lobster creature from out of the sea to kill people who annoy him. It doesn't make any more sense when you see the film, trust me. Lance Fuller is the only one who can rescue Lombardi's Trilby, a sock-eyed woman named Andrea, who, inexplicably, falls for the sack-of-doorknobs that is Lance. Eventually, the full-figured crawfish creature kills Lombardi and returns to the sea to spawn, or something.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow learns how painful it can be to confuse a Thawmaster and a Thighmaster. The audience learns just how far we'll go for stupid wordplay.

Segment One: Things with the Observers have deteriorated, what with Pearl in prison and Bobo about to be dissected. Pearl asks Mike for a distraction, which the Nanites provide, and takes one of the Observers' brains hostage. Mike blows up the Observers world, upping his planet destruction count to 2.

Segment Two: Crow makes a Tickle Me Carlo Lombardi doll, based on a saggy, lubricious character from this week's

film, *The She Creature*. It attacks Mike, naturally.

Segment Three: Pearl has escaped the Observers' planet with Bobo and one of the Brain Guys in tow. She tries to get them to sing a round of "Row Row Row Your Boat," but finds out that Bobo is too stupid. They get a flat and Bobo jumps out, falling to the surface of a new planet below.

Segment Four: Mike tries out his Lance Fuller acting technique, based on the non-acting of the lead character of *The She Creature*. This makes sense when you see the film and realize that Lance Fuller is a horrible, horrible actor.

Segment Five: Mike and the 'Bots try to guess what the question mark at the end of the film stood for. Meanwhile, Pearl taunts Mike because she's got the Observer on her side, an all-powerful being who, for some reason, obeys her every command.

Reflections

Unfortunately, many of my memories of past movies are swamped by ill feelings toward its actors. Did funny or interesting things happen during the filming of Episode #808 - *The She Creature*? I couldn't tell you - I was busy hating Lance Fuller. Any on-set shenanigans? Don't know - I was calling a contract hit on Dr. Carlo Lombardi.

I do remember feeling unmitigated joy at finishing my final shot as the Observer. No more clown white, an evil invention. It takes roughly 1300 scrubbings with Lava soap to get the stuff out of your skin. By the time you're done, your skin isn't so much red as it is gone. You can see the musculature that covers your face. You must go into hiding

for weeks until new flesh begins to grow and fill in. There are many good reasons not to become a clown (i.e., they're evil, wholly unfunny creatures in league with the Man-goat), and clown white is at the top of the list.

- *Michael J. Nelson*

Chapter 16

#809: I Was A Teenage Werewolf

I Was a Teenage Werewolf. Well, there you have it. There's not much more to add to that. This bio-pic portrays Michael Landon's life as a teenage werewolf. He's a frustrated teen who doesn't fit in. A psychiatrist (the magnetic Whit Bissell) does some sort of past life regression on Landon's character and he becomes a werewolf whenever he hears a bell ringing...or sees milk...or hears milk ringing... (I'm not real clear on this - neither is the movie). His girlfriend loves him for no apparent reason, and he has a pitiful dad who's doing his damnedest to try to keep things together. Landon's werewolfery spins out of control (because of Whit Bissell's unbridled ineptitude, I might point out) and all ends tragically. Although Landon dies in the end, so does Whit Bissell, so it's a draw.

Check out the entire Michael Landon bio-pic oeuvre, chronicling his entire life, which includes *I Was A Late-Teens/Early Twenties Cowboy*; *I Was A Middle-Age Prairie Dad*; *I Was An Angel Of A Certain Age*.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike is relieved of command of the ship. Servo is offered the job and declines on the basis that he cannot determine the difference between Shinola and the other

stuff, among other things.

Segment One: Pearl takes the Brain Guy and Bobo camping, leaving the SOL on their own, functioning only on ship's batteries. This leaves the SOL very vulnerable; in fact, within seconds a face-hugging alien attaches itself to Servo's head.

Segment Two: Crow gets a proximity detector to try to ferret out the aliens that are invading the ship. It malfunctions, but it measures humidity perfectly.

Segment Three: Servo is armed to the gills to do battle with whatever alien life-force is attacking the ship. Turns out, he's a big, giant crybaby.

Segment Four: Mike, Tom, and Crow set about eating all the eggs the foreign life force has left on the ship. Crow puts his own spin on things by trying to make the SOL a darling breakfast place.

Segment Five: Mike fends off the beast by mimicking Adam Duritz of Counting Crows. Naturally, the beast is repelled. Down on the unidentified planet where Pearl, Bobo, and Brain Guy have made camp, Pearl tells ghost stories.

Reflections

When visiting the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Area, I recommend a couple of marvelous breakfast spots...because breakfast is the most important meal of the day. And, if done correctly, it can be the most cholesterol-y and caloric meal of the day. There's the Day By Day Cafe in St. Paul, and in Minneapolis, there's the Egg & I, a veritable

Minneapolis institution, and the Bryant Lake Bowl. Wonderful breakfast places all and really quite reasonable. Or feel free to stop by my place and I'll fix you up you a diet Coke and a cigarette.

This movie is actually not that bad. Its quite competently rendered, although it does have long spells of goofiness. Case in point: The scene of the singing troll with the upsetting pants. I didn't hate this movie which is quite something, indeed!

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

Chapter 17

#810: The Giant Spider Invasion

Once upon a time in a faraway place called Wisconsin, evidently a land of alcoholic scrub farmers and prideless prostitutes, there was a low-budget filmmaker named Bill Rebane. He gathered a few of his sub-literate neighbors and made this movie. In it, between drinking and whoring and failing at various endeavors, these good people find themselves invaded via meteor by one or more large spiders who eat them. (I wouldn't eat one of these people, myself, but then I'm neither a giant spider nor Ed Gein.) A couple of unconvincing NASA scientists, one played by Barbara Hale of tattered *Perry Mason* fame, come to the rescue. They paste together some kind of explanation, and if I can recall (we wrote this way last week) blow the spiders up. Barbara Hale repeatedly deploys a harshly nasal scream toward the end, something like a cougar in heat. You ever hear a cougar in heat? Wow.

Oh yeah, it may not be worth mentioning that the town's Sheriff is played by Alan Hale.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo is a cheerleader, and a pert one at that, demanding that Mike and Crow give him an S, an A, etc. They refuse, but consent to give him an M, an R, an X, and

an L. Servo makes do. “We got the mrxl and you got none, uh huh uh huh!”

Segment One: Mrs. Pearl Forrester, yes that Pearl Forrester, regales the SOL with tales of camping on their new planet home; Observer had “harvested wild mushrooms with his mind, we sat by a crystal blue stream having mind-fried rainbow trout. Aw, it was heaven.” She mocks the SOL’s inability to camp, but Servo responds by portaging a canoe and knocking Mike and Crow over several times. Back on the planet, Pearl and Observer are strangely flat and lifeless, and offer the SOL some “zucchini-throw pillows.” Mike’s nervous; Servo says “they’re perfectly normal overgrown pod-like vegetation, you nervous Nellie you!”

Segment Two: Upon leaving the theater, Mike and the ‘Bots are met by Gypsy, now also strangely lifeless. She attempts quite strongly to convince them all to sleep, and sings a lullaby: “Let an evil super consciousness…swallow you whole…” It’s rather disconcerting.

Segment Three: The crew realizes that if they fall asleep, the evil pods will take them over, so they’re trying to stay awake. Servo keeps nodding off; Crow is wired on “French Roast, V-V-Vivarin, diet pills, M-M-Mountain Dew, Jolt, Water Joe, S-S-Surge…” On the planet, Pearl and Observer relentlessly load pods into the van: Evidently they want to take over the galaxy! They screech at Bobo when he tries to interfere.

Segment Four: A pod Servo shows up, along with the real Servo; Mike asks questions to determine which is the real one. It’s a pretty tight contest until Mike asks the contents of

Servo's underpants collection: "342 pairs of cotton boxers in various fabric designs, no duplicates; 78 pairs of silk boxers; 702 pairs of high-cut briefs; 55 pairs of low cut briefs; 7 banana warmers; one pair of the 'Home of the Whopper' briefs" etc. Pod Servo runs screeching.

Segment Five: Mike realizes he's the only normal one left on the SOL; he appeals to Bobo on the planet to find the mother pod and kill it. Bobo is resentful that he alone on the planet is not a pod: "Wanna know why? Cuz the monkey's not good enough - again!" He doubts his ability to save the galaxy ("I do have a red butt, Mike, I might as well face facts!") but Mike appeals to his great lineage, and Bobo wrestles the pod to death as Pearl and Bobo screech. Pearl, having missed the movie, sends it again.

Reflections

I've recently come to a sad realization: I must surrender one of my fondest dreams, that of living in a small town or rural community in northern Wisconsin or Minnesota. You know why, right? Guess who else lives in these places: Small-town white people, that's who. Granted, the drunkards and louts who streak across the screen (sometimes all too Seventies-style) in *The Giant Spider Invasion* are not entirely fair representations. They're exaggerated by as much as fifteen percent.

It's sad but true. As capitalism has decayed (I don't need to tell you about that, I trust) the bitterness in the hinterlands has increased a hundred-fold, so that long-haired guys in boots, a group I used to trust instinctively as being either

fans or members of the New Riders of the Purple Sage, have evolved in a deadly manner. They don't like people who aren't like them. And they live in northern Wisconsin.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 18

#811: Parts: The Clonus Horror

What appears to be a summer camp for tiny-brained adults turns out to be a secret encampment of clones, raised to provide body parts for (can you guess?) rich white people. Peter Graves is one of the whitest people there's ever been and in this movie he's also rich, so he's running for President. His brother is rich and white too but has something of a conscience, so when he meets his own clone - a thunderingly stupid fellow with a perpetually downcast mouth - he feels kinda bad. I mean who wouldn't, faced with your slim-shouldered womany clone looking at you with those big cow eyes?

This thick clone has escaped from the cruel and frankly condescending caretakers of the impenetrably isolated clone world by crossing an ankle-deep river and a line of medium-sized hills. As luck would have it he runs smack dab into Keenan Wynn and his wife, who between bouts of really bitter and pointless bickering take something of a shine to the young semi-human. They introduce him to Peter Graves' brother, thus setting in motion a chain of events. There are at least two events that I can remember.

Sadly (I guess), the Keenan Wynns are blown up by the forces of evil whiteness, our sad sack hero is recaptured, his clone girlfriend is given an entirely gratuitous lobotomy, and everything just falls apart. Keenan manages to get word

of the project to a reporter, but knowing rich white people as I do I wouldn't be surprised if they got their way regardless.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike sports a mustache for the first time in his life, and the robots are supportive. Servo: "You've given me the confidence I need. I'm gonna go get a big stinky spiral cut ham and staple it to my top lip!"

Segment One: On the planet, three evil space children have the power to make Pearl, Observer, and Bobo do anything, including hit themselves. On the SOL, Mike and the 'Bots discuss child nurturing techniques, and try to talk the kids out of sending them the movie. That fails, natch.

Segment Two: While Pearl and Brain Guy play Candy Land with two of the hideous tykes, Bobo tosses a ball with the third, who nails Bobo right in his expansive area: "Excuse me, Tante Bobo has to go see Uncle Reconstructive Urologist."

Segment Three: Candy Land continues; Bobo gets hit in the mess again; Pearl needs a break. The SOL obliges by staging two kids' TV shows. The first is an oddly quiet affair; the second features Mike (in gold hot pants) and the whole crew mimicking that frantic Mexican show that makes you wonder what in blazes is going on down south of the border.

Segment Four: The kids simply must know the facts of life, so Pearl and her companions try and fail to explain. Pearl's bitterness shines through. Bobo: "You're gonna get kicked in

the face, that's always part of it...grab one leg and hold on tight!" Bobo's poor abused area gets it again, of course.

Segment Five: Crow gets a nose job, leaving him with a tiny tiny nose, like the woman in the movie. The evil kids are almost asleep, so Servo composes a beautiful lyrical lullaby - and sets it to a rousing march, waking them. Bobo's hit right in the batch again.

Reflections

During the end credits there's a delightful little joke wherein Mike impersonates Peter Graves promising an upcoming *Biography* on the life of Peter Graves. Then, lo and behold, not a week after we taped this episode, there it was in the real world: Peter Graves on *Biography*. Damme!*

Since the older clones (in the world of the film) are really getting on in years, some of them nearing forty and even fifty, evidently this top-secret project has been around since at least the 1930s. Unless I'm mistaken, science in the 1930s consisted almost entirely of spindly rockets rising twelve feet and crashing back to the ground.

So the movie's implausible, I guess is my point.

Another thing: The great majority of these clones would never get used! Most of us go through life and never need a transplant of any sort, so what you'd have is a bunch of really old clones, hanging around, expecting to be entertained and fed. Which would be okay, they seem fairly easy to keep happy, but what would be the point? I ask you.

- Paul Chaplin

***Producer's Note**: Paul has recently taken to using the antiquated term "damme," pronounced, phonetically "dammee." a Middle English oath of self-derision, out of use for better than 150 years in this country. We believe Paul's use of this term serves no greater purpose than to annoy us and lord his mastery of dictionary use over us. Paul also uses anachronistic slang such as "nurtling om-tiddly-om-pom" and "shiny-bumming Willy-Wag," prompting us to theorize that his brain once belonged to a nineteenth-century British gunnery Sergeant, was subsequently pickled and installed in the bony skull of our own Paul when he was very young.

Chapter 19

#812: The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies

A drunken doughy salesman (that is, a salesman - we're talking 1964 here) turns down the apparently sexual advances of pizza-faced Carmelita, a carnival fortune-teller who summons her even more pizza-faced assistant Ortega to help her pour acid on the guy's face and usher him into the back room, where he joins her growing army of former salesmen who are now zombies. Had even one salesman consented to lay with Carmelita perhaps we might have been spared this movie, but on such chances doth history turn.

Then we meet a guy named Jerry (director Ray Dennis Steckler, acting under the pseudonym Cash Flagg) who is posited to be a rebel, albeit a whiny weenie sort of rebel. He's got a friendly Czech roommate, which is fine, and a girlfriend named Angie who in spite of her super-skinny mom and super-fey brother Madison seems a pleasant sort. So what's Jerry's problem? Why is he such a crab? Who knows. Anyway, soon enough Jerry, Angie, and roommate head to the carnival and what with one thing and another Jerry is ensnared by Carmelita and becomes a zombie. He

kills a carny or two and is shot by a cop on the beach.

Aside from all that, there are dozens of extravagantly shoddy dance numbers, performed by women clad only in saggy underpants.

What I've skipped could fill a paragraph.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow and Servo raise funds in competing walk-a-thons, for groups with real long acronyms. Servo's very deserving non-profit is called "Helping Children Through Research and Development," which stands for - you don't have time.

Segment One: Pearl is driving the annoying children from last show home; she keeps them fed and happy with her bountiful stock of bar snacks and non-alcoholic drink mixes. From the planet, the squabbling Bobo and Observer speak to the SOL only through audio and still shots. (Why?) Bobo hurls something unspeakable at Observer. It's something available only to him.

Segment Two: Crow and Servo, pretending to be a crack fortune-telling team, take Mike for fifty cents. Mike is a little disappointed.

Segment Three: Inspired by the nice foreign guy in the movie, Crow and Servo sport new pompadours. They talk Mike into getting one too, and he contacts Nanite Shelli. She gabs and talks and is just so nice and gives Mike a real real tall pompadour, I mean real tall.

Segment Four: Crow hires Ortega to cater the commercial

break. It's a great spread, especially the rellenos with smoky gouda and fresh crab, and the blue corn baskets with flaked trout in chipotle vinaigrette, although Mike simply must object to Ortega's filth and saliva and what not. Sadly, Ortega ashes in the quail eggs and his shame overwhelms him.

Segment Five: Crow and Servo put Mike in box, call it a roller coaster, serve him some hot coffee and push him off the desk. Pearl drops off the kids at their parents'. They're huge and omnipotent so she turns down their offer of coffee and carrot cake.

Reflections

In the vast history of MST movies made by oily guys who elect to direct the camera largely on themselves, this one stands out, although to be fair Ray Dennis Steckler is really no oilier than a number of sallow oleaginous fellows we could name. Actually, we couldn't name them, but we could definitely think of them and retch.

You know what, though? On the way on to work this morning I perceived a vision of three crosses surrounding the sun. It was a moment of blinding purity and a sign to change my ways, I'm sure, so I'm going to take the high road and play down the overt criticism. Except I do need to mention that the *Psychotronic Guide to Films* describes this movie as "unbelievably well photographed."

Hm.

The cinematographer was one Vilmos Zsigmond, see, and with a name like that what else could he grow up to be, I

ask you. He's a famous fellow who went on to cinematographize many a great film, as well as *The Ghost and the Darkness* and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 20

#813: Jack Frost

Jack Frost, near as we can figure, is a Russo-Finnish co-production. Like so many of our movies, it is comprised of a bunch of unrelated elements which then are sort of taped together to form a tangible blob of moving pictures to which we viewers apply our persistence of vision and suspend our disbelief. I think…I'm guessing…I have been led to believe by the film that: The lovely, sweet Nastinka is despised by her stepmother who favors her own daughter. Nastinka meets Ivan in the woods one day, after he's had a long day of frolicking with a mushroom dwarf who then puts a spell on Ivan for his conceitedness. The spell turns Ivan into a bear shortly after meeting Nastinka. Nastinka feels she is to blame, as all women do everywhere for every thing, and searches the land to find Ivan, who himself is trying to find out how to reverse the spell. I think. I've only seen the movie seven or eight times, so it's all kind of unclear. Meanwhile, the evil step-mother is trying to marry off the other daughter. Throw in a bunch of elves, witches, dancing houses, snow and, of course, Jack Frost, who screws everything up then puts it all to right.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike Nelson IS Michael Flatley in *Lord of the Dance*. Gypsy looks on, duly unimpressed.

Segment One: Pearl Forrester is away, taking the prescient

children from Episode #812 back to their omnipotent parents. She has left Observer and Bobo alone, and Bobo insists he's in charge; but Brain Guy has to take care of Bobo's daily ablutions. Bobo confronts Brain Guy about his *odor de body* and Mike gently referees.

Segment Two: Crow brings in an expert to elucidate the film, Yakov Smirnoff, played by prop-master extraordinaire Patrick Brantseg. Yakov doesn't know jack about the film, natch.

Segment Three: Crow has taken his bear simulation to the extreme, and down on the "Camping Planet" [as was our working title for the scenes not shot on the SOL] Bobo and Brain Guy have finally, grudgingly bonded.

Segment Four: Who better to explicate the film than the drummer of Survivor's great-aunt Gladys Fletcher's friend Eunice Torgeson's estranged half-brother Earl Torgeson, a butcher in Sanford, Maine, who specializes in old-world sausages, who visits the SOL and recounts many a tale and fable about the movie *Jack Frost*.

Segment Five: Servo is darling. He's cute. He's adorable…as he persistently insists. Down on Camping Planet, Bobo and Brain Guy have an intense tête-à-tête about whether *Every Which Way But Loose* or *Every Which Way You Can* is the better ape film. They bring Mike down to con-fab, and Pearl arrives back declaring that *Dunston Checks In* is the best ape movie ever.

Reflections

This movie had one of my favorite characters ever, the mean

step-sister. The step-sister was, how shall I say, a virile woman with a deep, dubbed voice. She was mean and spiteful and spoiled but I daresay she wasn't irredeemable, nor can she wholly be blamed. She was a product of bad parenting! And she made me laugh, especially when she's getting made-up by her mother; when she's trying to fake her way through dinner; and most especially when she brawls with Jack Frost himself.

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

Chapter 21

#814: Riding with Death

This epic slice of the Seventies is actually two episodes of a failed and monumentally stupid TV series (*Gemini Man*) welded together. It (they) star(s) the vacuous, meaty Ben Murphy, an alleged Harvard Law grad, now a super-agent for a super secret agency that works out of a parking garage in Sherman Oaks. On a super secret mission, radiation turned Ben invisible rather than killing him and ending the series before it started, dammit.

In the first episode of the -ahem- movie, addle-pated Ben plays a trucker, a station far beyond his intellect, and along with Heywood Floyd from *2001: A Space Odyssey* spearheads a badly planned transport of a super-secret fuel additive from—

Aw, who the hell am I kidding? Why even bother? The plot is stupid and pointless, the dialogue pat and smarmy, the actors stagy in that mid-Seventies Universal Television "who-gives-a-good-crap" sort of way, Heywood Floyd is embarrassingly bad. And to cap it off, *Riding With Death* showcases the slimy ministrations of the insipid, badly dressed, and apparently talentless cracker Jim Stafford. And I'm just talking about the good stuff.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike shows off his talents as a teppanyaki chef, chopping everything in sight; he slices off one of Crow's

claws, cooks it lightly, and serves it to him. Yum.

Segment One: Mike and the 'Bots get an urgent call from the nice camping planet: Bobo, Pearl, and Brain Guy are under attack by renegade warlike robots! Bobo has Gas, Brain Guy is dressed like a nurse, and Mike ultimately blows up yet another planet, by gum.

Segment Two: Servo, looking not unlike Anthony Geary*, plugs in his Arp and struts his stuff in a musical tribute to the Seventies. But poor dumb Servo has got it wrong, he wrote about the decade of 70 A.D. (or C.E., if you must), not the Nineteen Seventies! Hilarity ensues. Crow rounds out the cast.

Segment Three: Servo, inspired by all the trucking in the movie, has somehow procured a skinny-legged but paunchy trucker body, complete with flannel shirt, little cowboy boots, and belt buckle. Mike points out that he has no butt. Servo takes exception; he likes his butt and talks to it.

Segment Four: Crow appears in just the cutest little outfit, and declares himself Turkey Volume Guessing Man! The premise hinges on one or two colloquial uses of the word "turkey" in a pejorative context, and quickly collapses when Mike demonstrates his own uncanny ability to guess an area's volume in increments of turkeys.

Segment Five: On the SOL, Mike and the 'Bots try to recreate a canned method of injecting a actor who wasn't in a film into the film. It fails. In the Widowmaker, Pearl forces Bobo and Brain Guy to honor her with so many medals and ribbons for bravery she topples, sending them careening off into the beyond somewhere.

Reflections

While we were shooting this episode, a crew from Gold Coast Productions was at our studio, shooting a behind-the-scenes special. Bill Corbett was dressed in his Observer makeup as a nurse, all day long. As a result, many viewers might come away with the impression that Bill is a cross-dressing albino. This is of course very, very true.

During the production of the behind-the-scenes special, the producers made the mistake of giving us home video cameras to document our true selves at work. I think you will see us as we are, a bunch of bizarre, hammy, blathering fools who somehow have barely enough wits about us to cobble together a puppet show in a reasonable amount of time.

As for the movie *Riding with Death*, I could go on for hours on how annoyingly inept this thing was. Looking over the encyclopedia of prime time TV, it becomes apparent that casting Ben Murphy was the kiss of death for a series, and yet he managed to work for years without anyone becoming suspect. And Jim Stafford, I'm told, was once named one of the ten best dressed men in America, giving additional weight to my argument that the 1970s was the most shameful era in fashion perhaps in the history of civilization, with the possible exception of the Elizabethan era when Men wore panty hose and puffy shorts in public.

- *Kevin Murphy*

*Anthony Geary played Luke on *General Hospital*, a

character who rose to become America's favorite sexual predator.

Chapter 22

#815: Agent For H.A.R.M.

Ah yes, it's the Sixties again, and studly secret agents are running all over the place, proud and free. The eponymous "Agent For H.A.R.M." is one Adam Chance, a joyless fellow who favors yellow cardigan sweaters and looks like Dr. Smith's less effeminate younger brother. Chance is assigned to protect one Dr. Jan Steffanic, a scientist recently defected from a vague Iron Curtain country (remember them?). Turns out Steffanic is on the cutting edge of some wacko technology which shoots "spores" at people, turning them into quivering masses of green-grey fungus - quite a disgusting little fate, as you might imagine. Dr. Steffanic also has a frequently-bikini-ed niece, who is certifiably hot. And though she is easily 25 years younger than Chance (really, when has that ever mattered in the world of movies?), they become entangled. They survive an onslaught of fey, mincing Euro-bad guys, one of whom is the artist known as Prince. Turns out the niece - like most alluring women in these kind of movies - is Evil and not to be trusted. She is exposed as a double agent for the Commies, and then the movie mercifully ends.

Host Segments

Prologue: The 'Bots are really into Extreme Sports, man. Doesn't matter what, as long as it's extreme and you can yell really loud while doing it. This includes Extreme Yoga and Extreme Stamp Collecting. They berate Mike for being so

un-Extreme.

Segment One: Mike is whisked away from the SOL by a mysterious Intergalactic Judge to stand trial for his recent rash of world-destroying. Bobo is appointed his defense attorney. Pearl, of course, is the prosecutor.

Segment Two: Pearl and Bobo's opening statements. Bobo gets very off-track, digressing mostly into ruminations about food. Mike feels doomed.

Segment Three: The 'Bots supply video testimony to the court. Servo mistakes his with a TV telethon; Crow sinks Mike's boat even further with a barrage of bleeped obscenities.

Segment Four: Servo searches for a legal precedent that might help Mike. Meanwhile down in the courtroom, the Observer testifies, adding weight to Pearl's case. But then he's craftily trapped in a lie about baking pies by Bobo, who knows his pies if he knows anything.

Segment Five: The 'Bots hold a candlelight vigil for Mike on the SOL. Meanwhile, Pearl calls her final witness, Ortega, who is sealing Mike's doom. Then Bobo counters with a little Amish boy, and all heck breaks loose. Finally the verdict from the Judge: Mike is guilty! And is sentenced to death!...But this is quickly commuted to community service. Back on the SOL, the 'Bots are not shy in making Mike get right to it, cleaning up the mess they made while he was away.

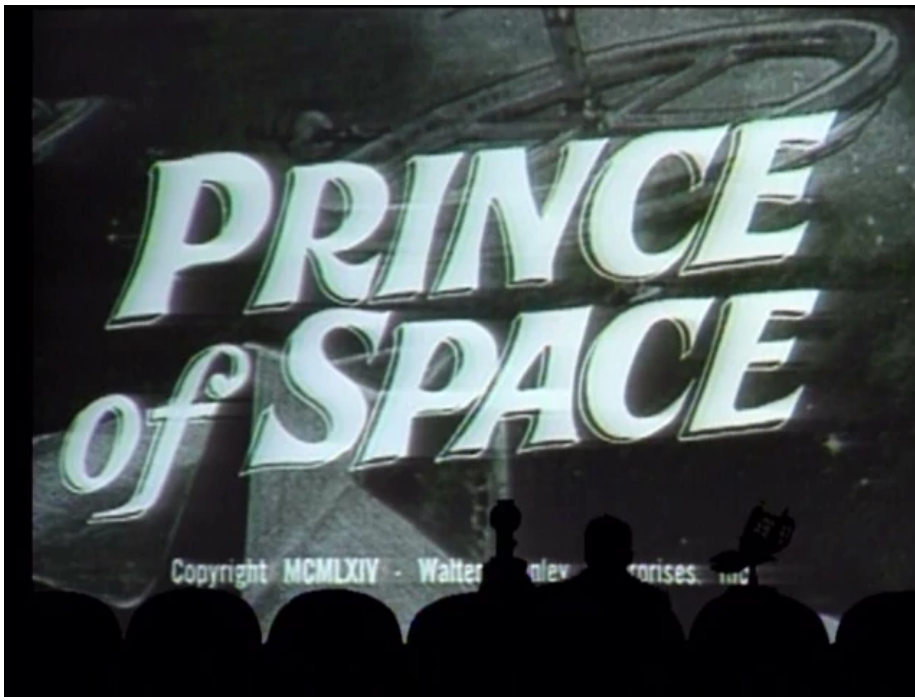
Reflections

The generic-sixties-spy movie theme from *Agent for H.A.R.M.* provided us all with yet another vehicle to torture each other's already embattled psyches around here at Best Brains - it was sung and hummed at top volume for weeks, ultimately hurting everyone involved, I think.

This show had several milestones in it, if you're into that kinda thing. It marked the directorial debut of one Michael "Antonioni" Nelson, who did an excellent job despite the pretentious on-set wardrobe of jodhpurs and riding crop. Mike had a tough first assignment with our extended courtroom scenario, which was a trip into the unfamiliar for all of us - but came through with flying colors (or more appropriately, with flying black and white). It was also the first show where the voice of Gypsy was supplied by our own set-and-prop genius Patrick Brantseg, filling Jim Mallon's big shoes extraordinarily well, and wielding the often-unwieldy Gypsy like a pro.

I also think Mary Jo and Kevin reached new heights of funny for Pearl and Bobo in the host segments, as attorneys for the prosecution and defense, respectively. Our brilliant editor Brad Keeley turned in a Cable Ace-worthy comic performance as the little Amish boy, challenging our collective ability to keep a collective straight face while taping. I played the intergalactic judge, and though my voice changed accents and octaves in every segment, it was, technically, supposed to be only one consistent character - although when Brain Guy took the stand, Paul sat in as the Judge. This is noticeable on not-so-close scrutiny, since I weigh roughly four times what Paul does, and it shows in the face.

- Bill Corbett



Chapter 23

#816: Prince of Space

This movie is Japanese. It's so Japanese in fact that the actors spoke Japanese, and so in order to understand it, it had to be dubbed in English. And this is where our sad involvement begins.

So the plot as it appeared to me is this: This mean guy, The Phantom of Krankor or just Krankor as we called him, and his band of tiny-wienered (as in Oscar Meyer) minions are out to capture Earth, by way of Japan. Krankor laughs a lot. Meanwhile a slim bachelor bootblack and his microshort-wearing bootblack kid friends root for Japan's savior - Prince of Space. Prince of Space, in a farm-fresh plot twist, is really the slim bachelor guy! Tension mounts as the phrase "Your weapons are powerless against me!" is repeated 700 times. There's a monster thing and the kids have access to all levels of commerce, industry, and military decision-making. Approx. running time: 4 days.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow and Tom are playing bear and coonhound. Servo (the coonhound) gets carried away and Crow is traumatized physically and mentally. Mike is tender in his care for Crow.

Segment One: Bobo is tethered to a rope so he can go potty in space. His paranoia about Pearl and Observer "looking" leads him into a tunnel for privacy. The tunnel is a

wormhole which sucks the Widowmaker into its vortex. Pearl insists that Observer lasso the SOL, and they all hurtle into the unknown.

Segment Two: The wormhole has created havoc with the space-time continuum, so everything is mixed up by three seconds and most of the confusion centers on a chicken puppet.

Segment Three: More wormhole. This time it causes Mike to turn into a little puppet guy. He tries in vain to give orders but is mocked by the 'Bots: "We only take orders from Willie Tyler and Lester!"

Segment Four: A true departure. Mike and the 'Bots find themselves in the woods, not fake studio woods but real Minnesota 10,000 Lakes woods. It's odd.

Segment Five: All seems normal on the SOL until Mike introduces his wife Krankor (Bill). Pearl and Observer have landed on a suspiciously Roman-looking world. A "to be continued" effect is achieved when guards are instructed to "seize them."

Stinger: Krankor, and his laugh like a Buick not turning over.

Reflections

The movie was made bearable only by the fact that we ate sushi for lunch. Also, Krankor and company's droopy crotch areas made me have to close my eyes so I missed a good deal of the movie.

Look for a cute chipmunk (squirrel?) run across the path in

the outdoor scene.

When Kevin and I were trying on our roman costumes he complained that his slip was too lacy, to which Mary Jo replied, “Were you hoping for a more masculine slip?” That Mary Jo, what a minx. (In the end, Kevin wore shorts under his toga.)

It should be noted that Beez worked day and night getting Flavia’s dress and wig just right. She did a great job! I’m just sad I’m an adult and can’t go to prom anymore because Beez could make the coolest dress ever!

- *Bridget Jones*

Chapter 24

#817: The Horror of Party Beach

Doughty 1960s seagoing polluters dump rusty casks filled with radioactive waste into the ocean. The spill is immediate, as is the effect: A long-submerged human skeleton turns into a monster with many odd tubes protruding where its mouth should be. (Surrounding fish remain unaffected).

Meanwhile, on the beach, a convention of old teenagers bare their aging bodies and enjoy the really pretty good songs of a band called the Del-Aires. As sinewy men dance and wiggle their pelvi far too enthusiastically, a motorcycle gang arrives; a girl flirts with a gang member, and a fight ensues. The girl, angry at the loss of focus on her perfectly innocent striptease, swims out to a tiny island and is eaten.

A whole townload of fleshy cops and scientists, moving with the quick precision of a school of groupers, wake slowly to the possibility that they have a problem. When a whole slumber party's worth of girls is eaten these guys really begin working feverishly, and before too many weeks have passed they discover they have no idea what's going on. Eulabelle, a scientist's happy servant (those were the days, huh?), helps these stupid white men realize the monsters can be killed with sodium.

Which, basically, is what happens, after way too long a time. There's also a romance sub-plot, which concludes with

two normal people beginning a normal life together.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo is a Gyuto Monk, and achieves multi-layers of his own chanting voice.

Segment One: Pearl and Observer must convince Callipygeas and Flavia they're gods, so Observer produces a spoon and then a bigger spoon. Flavia sees Pearl talking to the robots, and remarks on the average-looking man-god, the golden spider duck, and the squat crimson pig.

Segment Two: Mike's trunks that the 'Bots made him for the "manly beach dance" are a trifle small.

Segment Three: Still trying to convince their hosts of their god-dom, Pearl and Observer make some old-fashioned hoe-down music. Observer begins talk-singing about "Beef!"

Segment Four: Impressed with the ever-changing newspaper headlines in the movie, Servo irritates Mike with his own version, with headlines reflecting what's happening at that moment.

Segment Five: Dressed as the Del-Aires, Mike and the 'Bots sing of sodium. Flavia and Pearl insult each other, a lot and viciously.

Stinger: The dancing on the beach, with eyes drawn to semi-nude sinewy fellow.

Reflections

The Del-Aires gradually seduced us all with their playing

ability, song-writing talents, and wry self-aware dorkiness. I mean it - they were a darn good band, and if anybody out there knows anything about them we'd be interested.

Reflexively, of course, we made fun of them anyway. Sorry.

This movie could be viewed as an allegory on the dangers of over-regulation. Sure, the dumping of radioactive waste would seem to be a bad thing, especially since it resulted in hellish monsters that ate people. And yet, didn't the free market stand ready to correct this mistake? Weren't there an endless array of sodium supply houses, efficiently providing exactly the stuff needed to kill the creatures? Who's to say that stifling regulations against waste dumping wouldn't result - albeit indirectly - in even more deaths, what with the loss of jobs and innovation?

The leading man, Hank, seemed genetically compelled to verbalize the name "Eulabelle" with a plantation owner's resonance and southern patois. Sadly, it was the only time he ever put any sort of spin on anything he said.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 25

#818: Devil Doll

Okay, you got a sour ventriloquist/hypnotist, a lady with the bottom half of her butt hanging out of a skimpy costume, a crabby vent figure containing the soul of a guy, another lady in a skimpy costume, a mush-mouthed hero, a couple fellows with big beards, some Germans, a whole herd of rich old ladies: And go!!

And…nothing.

A ventriloquist named The Great Vorelli with the most unconvincing act this side of the Thames controls women, abuses his dummy Hugo, and employs semi-voodoo to get his puny way. That's really all you need to know. The leading man is another fine example of our heroes who get themselves into a scrape and then stumble out of it completely by accident.

There's a real darkness to this movie, too. You can't see a thing.

It's so bad I don't feel like talking about it anymore. *North By Northwest*, though, isn't that a great movie? To my mind, it's the essential Hitchcock film. It's light, yet genuinely tense; it showcases Cary Grant at his sexy middle-aged height, it contains scene after scene so well-crafted as to defy belief; it's funny, it's cool, it's got that 1950s color going for it, it features the line "She really did get under your skin, didn't she, Mr. Kaplan?" It's got Eva Marie Saint. The auction scene alone is a masterpiece most directors

could never even imagine.

I guess what I'm saying is that *North By Northwest* is a better move than *Devil Doll*. I'll be very surprised if someone can convince me otherwise.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo arranges a blow-out dorm drinkin' bash with speakers in the window and everything, but all he can afford is a very nice window. No beer, no speakers.

Segment One: Still residing in Ancient Rome, Pearl is bored by a "Welcome Gods" party and tries to turn it into a toga party, which understandably flops. Observer produces pants, and all enjoy a pants party. On the SOL, Crow (having apparently drunk some Nanite-produced beer) gets sloppy and abusive about "Debbie" and punches in Servo's window.

Segment Two: Crow consorts with Pitch, a very minor demon from the Comedy Central years, who is selling very nice collectible "devil dolls." Mike is horrified, which Crow really can't understand.

Segment Three: Crow and Servo set up a real nice British pub for Mike, but the excitement dies quickly as all wait and wait and wait for the fantastically thick brew as it oozes ever so slowly into Mike's glass.

Segment Four: Pitch is back, teaching Crow how to transfer Servo's soul into a hastily-assembled new Servo, à la the movie. Servo's going along of course, but Mike is again horrified and Crow is again upset that Mike is horrified. By the end, Servo has transferred his own soul into a toaster

pastry.

Segment Five: Crow dresses Mike up as Hugo, the dummy from the movie, sticks him in a cage and whispers insults about how he's not going to feed him any ham, also like in the movie. (It's a weird movie.) Servo shows up as a leggy toaster strudel assistant with its butt hanging out. In Rome, all attend a fight at the Coliseum featuring the Mad Goth: It's Bobo!!

Stinger: Hugo the dummy attacks The Great Vorelli in a fever of punches.

Reflections

Upon reflection, I like this movie even less now than I did a few minutes ago when I was writing the first part.

Our hero (I forget his name and I guarantee so will you) travels to Berlin at one point to interview a former Vorelli assistant, a phase of her life I'm sure she highlights on her resume. She's a dour German woman, rooming with a lumpy German guy. Having grown up around a lot of German women, I have to say, German women are in fact capable of smiling. They do nice things like make Krumkake and Spätzle. So don't get the wrong idea about German women from this one example. She was a real sourpuss.

Sometimes I get a little nervous about having repeatedly played the role of a demon from Hell, even if it is all in fun. I wonder if I might not be somehow inviting the Dark One into my own soul? I sure hope not!

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 26

#819: Invasion of the Neptune Men

Filmed in exquisite Pain-O-Rama, this paean to Japan's failure as a Twentieth Century World Power pits the fierce little archipelago against a dozen lumbering mute robots in a rocket which might at full bore achieve dirigible-like speeds. The eponymous invaders seem to have but one superhuman power, the ability to transmogrify into transsexual infantrymen. But once again, at the time of most critical need, the reins of Japanese governance are given to children. And not charming little children, but mincing, horrid little spawn whose only redeeming quality is that they can only become less annoying as adults. Right on cue, the invaders invade, drooling Japanese scientists are helpless, the military postures and rattles its flaccid spears, and the children assume power and pull the country's *otoro* out of the fire, again. Oh, and there's an impotent hero named Space Chief. Starring no one, not a living soul, and filmed in black and white so depressing it would drive Fred Rogers to eat a Glock. Watch for a delightful cameo by Adolph Hitler (in the film I mean).

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow and Servo are disgusted by the thought of Mike having eyelash mites, actual ravenous creatures living on his filthy eyelids, and decide to take action.

Segment One: Crow and Tom ally with the Nanites and stage an all-out assault against Mike's eyelash mites. But the Mites are too powerful for the courageous Nanite forces, who are laid waste, in a scene in which humor borders on the tragic, and, hopefully, makes gives us all pause. Ah, hell, who am I kidding. Meantime, Pearl and Observer, trapped in Ancient Rome, finally meet up with Bobo, who has lost his memory and become the toast of Rome as the Mad Goth, a savage gladiator with many a lion kill under his belt. Bobo's a celebrity, and acts the part, happily receiving a massive - and anatomically complimentary - statue in his likeness.

Segment Two: The 'Bots stage a Kabuki play, Mike mentions Noh Theater, the 'Bots get confused and a lively wordplay sketch ensues. A tip of the hat to the Marx Brothers and of course Abbott and Costello, or maybe Allen and Rossi.

Segment Three: Observer and Pearl try to convince Bobo that he is not the Mad Goth, but all Bobo needs is a statue and a grape to make him happy. Meanwhile Servo suffers form Roji Panty Complex, poor guy. Mike applies panties.

Segment Four: The Movie is getting our guys down. Mike and the 'Bots are clearly struggling with this one. But who should happen along to light up their lives but The Phantom Dictator of Krankor, from Episode #816, *Prince of Space*!!...So who is this clown, you ask? Did you see Episode #816? No? Never mind. Think of it as Bill Corbett in an embarrassing costume.

Segment Five: Crow uses a fabricated suggestion box to try

his hand at Japan-bashing. Mike stops him just in time. In Roman Times, Pearl, now fed up with Bobo, bashes him with a stone tablet, resulting in Bobo regaining his memory, and immediately getting them all arrested, complete with nifty *Star Trek*-style end-of-the-segment tension hook. Enjoy in moderation.

Reflections

I have walked this earth scarcely two score years. And rife as I may be with the callow demagogic wisdom of middle age, quick am I to call up the genuine horrors of my youth, when evil was real and palpable, and to look upon a thing which tore at the sinews of my fledgling soul and look away without pause was to name its maker, the antithesis of joy and love, the teller of dark lies, the beast.

But enough about *Batman and Robin*.

Suffice it to say that the reprehensible nature of *Invasion of the Neptune Men* is embodied in the filmmaker's choice to use actual WWII file footage in what is ostensibly a children's film. To glibly summon the darkest shadows of our century because one has run out of models to blow up is to stoop to Schumacherian levels of banality. Though we as a rule cut only for time, we also cut for violent content, and we very clearly considered arial bombardment footage of Japan to be of a violent nature. 'Nuff said.

...can you tell I hated this film?

- *Kevin Murphy*

Chapter 27

#820: Space Mutiny

In a time at some point way in the future, there are literally many people living in a large basement warehouse - I'm sorry, I mean a large spaceship, clearly a spaceship, what with all the storage area and forklifts and security guards sitting around at massive metal desks, the kinds of things one expects to find in a spaceship, and not at all in a basement warehouse or other planet-bound industrial facility - just kind of drifting around the galaxy, apparently having fled some sort of awkward situation on Earth; maybe they'll settle down on a Class M planet someday, who knows, what the hey.

This placid bunch is ruled by a bearded Cameron Mitchell and his elderly daughter in hot pants (the pants being the hot item in this case, and not what they envelop), and all seems well until the movie starts, when the security forces in this warehouse (spaceship!! Darn!) come to their senses and plan a mutiny to force Captain Santa to land anywhere.

The bad guys are foiled when the thickly-muscled Rider, a free-lance jock/pilot, bullies his way to the top in this goofy world, simply because he and no one else has any command or leadership qualities. There is fighting; there are guys falling over railings; there are some real skinny dancing girls (the kind you would in fact expect to find dancing in a warehouse space), and after we get to see Rider and The World's Oldest Daughter rolling on the concrete floor of this spaceship, the mutiny is put down.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow and Servo are outraged that the ship's encyclopedia is so out-of-date; they engage in a bit of 'Bot-ish hyperbole to make their point.

Segment One: Mike gets new encyclopedias, with on-line links and all, but the 'Bots are mad cuz they like complaining. In Rome, Pearl and friends are locked in a dungeon. Brain Guy's brain has been taken from him, so he is somewhat addled, as shown by his lame attempts to bring Mike down to help.

Segment Two: Inspired by the film, Crow and Servo take the only two remaining escape pods on the SOL (of which Mike knew not a thing) and have a fine dogfight out in space before crashing them into the SOL. Man these guys are idiots sometimes!

Segment Three: Be-wigged be-robed Crow declares himself a "Bellarian" (the name for the skinny dancing women), but then is not so sure. In Rome, Bobo regurgitates several items, including a key to his chains; but in his excitement he forgets to do anything but get a banana to eat.

Segment Four: Servo installs safety railings all over the SOL. They're not that safe. They make people fall over a lot, in fact. It's just another example of Servo taking something to a ridiculous extreme.

Segment Five: Crow, having lifted, shows off his wee muscle to Mike, who manages to insult it; Servo is all bulked up and thick-voiced, and asks Mike for a spot. On the planet, Observer regains his brain and sets them all free,

while using Mike as a distraction: the spluttering boob is rejected by Flavia just long enough to do a tiny bit of good. Bobo burns down Rome.

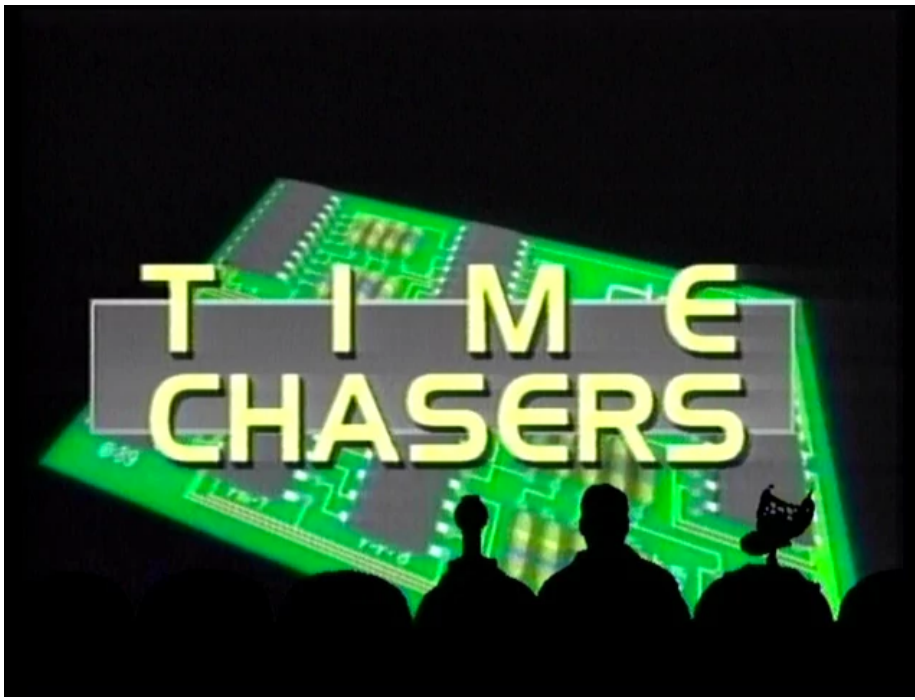
Stinger: Rider (aka Flank McBrickgroin) screams and leaps from his golf cart.

Reflections

As has been the case with several of our movies over the years, almost everyone in this world talks in what would seem to be an Australian accent, although we've found out since taping that the thing was made in South Africa, of all places, so this qualifies as the MST equivalent of caving in and playing Sun City. Oh well.

We got a lot of Internet comments on how we didn't joke about how this movie used the *Battlestar Galactica* ship for the exteriors, and I have to admit, in retrospect we didn't joke about that at all. To quote the jury foreman at the end of *The Producers*, of this charge we are in fact incredibly guilty.

- *Paul Chaplin*



Chapter 28

#821: Time Chasers

There was probably a period - perhaps back when Homo Erectus was giving way reluctantly to the more centered and erudite Neanderthals - when the idea of time travel really was just too, too fascinating. But isn't it about time for people who do things like make movies (and write *Star Trek: Voyager* for that matter) to move on to another basic plot device?

Anyway. In Vermont, in 1991, a lone healthy bike-riding science teacher named Nick develops time travel and sells it immediately to a transparently evil corporation. While traveling through time trying to impress his wildly wholesome love interest Lisa, Nick discovers that GenCorp plans to use time travel to destroy civilization. Mr. Robertson, the lanky CEO of GenCorp, refuses to not destroy civilization, so a couple Mr. Robertsons and several Nicks and any number of Lisas chase each other through time back to the Revolutionary War. One Lisa ends up dead, and one Nick, and one Mr. Robertson, but it doesn't matter because with time travel there's always equally uninteresting spares to take their place.

Nick and Lisa win out, no thanks to a handful of very dumpy patriots who wander around a field nearby, and Nick returns to 1991 and destroys the secret of time travel. At the end he and Lisa meet up in the produce section and fall into the lettuce and just go at it in the most passionate, sweaty, grinding manner, it's some of the hottest - well no they

don't, but the clear implication is they will wholesomely produce some children at some point. We're left with the hope that perhaps the new generation will be the one with no interest in time travel.

Host Segments

Prologue: The 'Bots trap Mike into playing *Lost in Space* with them, so that Servo can say "Danger Will Robinson" and Crow can insult Mike alliteratively.

Segment One: Following instructions from Pearl, Mike docks the SOL next to the Widowmaker and leaves the 'Bots with videos while he drifts over and chats with Pearl. It's a charming talk about her evil nature; Bobo's snoozing sounds are heard over a baby monitor.

Segment Two: Taking their cue from the film, Crow and Servo decide to send Crow back to the cheese factory where Mike worked in the mid-1980s and talk him out of taking the temp job with Deep 13 that resulted in him being shot into space. Young Mike is burnout, and doesn't quite get it. A blank-faced coworker looks on.

Segment Three: Crow succeeds in talking Mike into pursuing his musical career with his totally rocking band Sex Factory. Arriving back at the SOL, Crow is horrified to find the new reality features Mike's abusive brother Eddie. Servo is all obedient and sniveling.

Segment Four: Crow goes back in time and talks Crow out of talking Mike out of changing his life path. The stoner coworker (our own Patrick) says "Dude."

Segment Five: Crow and Servo try to trap Mike into playing *Gilligan's Island*, but Mike is wise to them. Mike and Pearl have another warm chat; Pearl points out that there now is apparently a spare Crow living in 1980s Wisconsin. Turns out she's right. Dude.

Stinger: Mr. Robertson, CEO of GenCorp, in his hick voice: "Matt, it's time for you to decide if you're going to be one of my team players or not."

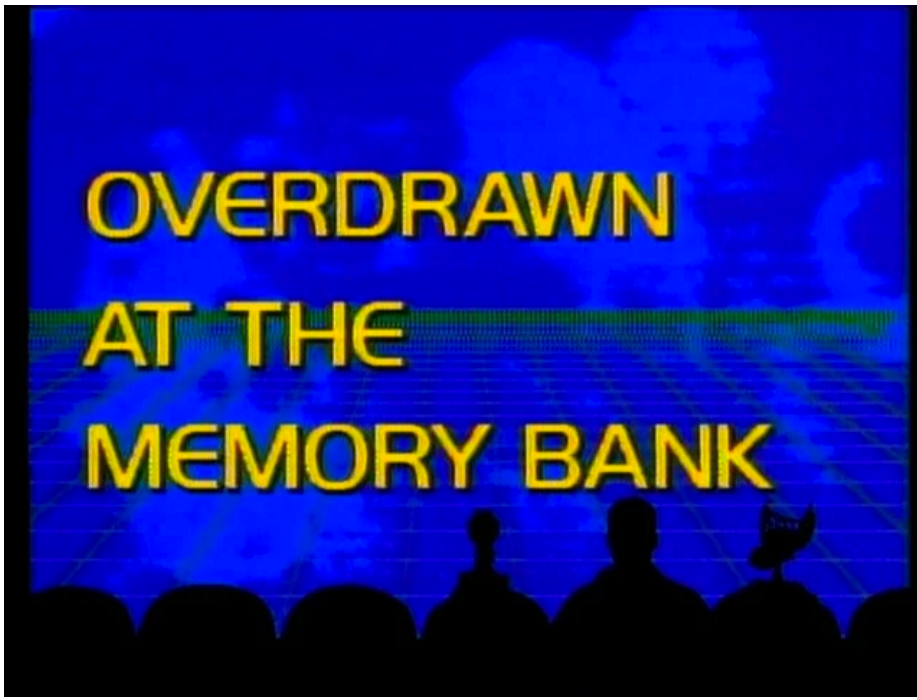
Reflections

The nice people who made this movie found out we were doing it and were very excited. We even talked to the guy who played GenCorp underling Matthew Paul on the phone, and got a definite sense that the whole project was undertaken by a group of well-adjusted people. That is certainly not true of most of our movies, and they're to be commended. And truth be told - and remember, I'm only saying this in order to be polite - this really isn't a horrible film.

There being a corporate exec in the film, we had at least one ISO 9001 certification joke. Banners proclaiming such certification have been springing up around this strange land, this Eden Prairie industrial park world that Best Brains calls home; we've been curious about what it actually is. Turns out Company A can pay a good deal of money to have another company certify that Company A in fact does what it says it does. That's ISO 9001 certification. So there are ISO 9001 certifiers running around out there, and that's exactly the sort of job I suspect is the real substance of the

American Growth Machine. Don’t get me started.

- *Paul Chaplin*



Chapter 29

#822: Overdrawn at the Memory Bank

Raul Julia stars as Aram Fingal (yeah, right), a brilliant but bored data-input-something-or-other for the huge Novicorp Corporation, which acts really benign, but - gosh, wouldn't you know it - we find out that they're really kinda evil. After being busted for watching movies on the job (movies being cleverly renamed "cinemas," in a genius stroke of faux-George Orwell), Fingal's essence gets lost in the corporation's huge mainframe during a mandatory "dopple," wherein his mind, or something, is put into an aging baboon, for reasons known only to the screenwriter. Some creepy little sex-crazed kid switches Fingal's toe-tags in the operating room, and his essence goes running around the computer changing everything into some watered-down version of the 1942 movie *Casablanca*. And, oh yeah, when he does that...it's really "funny."

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow decides he has a famous catch phrase: "You know you want me, baby!" He's already got LOTS of T-shirts printed up (sure, they're paid for, with Mike's credit card).

Segment One: Following instructions from Pearl, The 'Bots try to come up with catch phrases for Mike. He keeps choosing the dullest ones. Meanwhile, Pearl has decided she

has her own public television station, and can make lots of cold hard cash holding a pledge drive.

Segment Two: Crow and Servo order a pet monkey for the SOL from Instant Monkeys Online. The monkey takes an instant dislike to Mike, and keeps throwing things at him. Funny, huh?!

Segment Three: Mike is still having his dominance challenged by the monkey. Down at the pledge drive, Pearl is calling attention to some of the other fine programming on her public TV station, notably a stunning special starring well, herself. She shows an excerpt: She and Brain Guy performing a lyrically deficient love duet.

Segment Four: Inspired by the movie, Servo decides to dopple himself down to Nanite world and mess with them. But he winds up in a tough Nanite neighborhood, and gets his dopple-butt syntho-kicked.

Segment Five: The 'Bots have enlisted Bobo to come up to the SOL and talk the monkey down. But Bobo goes over to the other side, and in a show of simian solidarity, begins chucking HUGE things on the bridge. Meanwhile, Pearl is winding up her pledge drive, counting her greenbacks. She makes sure to tip her phone bank - which consists of Ortega, and only Ortega.

Stinger: Raul Julia: "Mom my nuts." (That's sure what it sounds like.)

Reflections

The real problem here - rare indeed for our show - is that

the lead character is played by an actor who is actually a very good and highly respected actor: Raul Julia. And the recently deceased Raul Julia, at that. So we spent much of the movie feeling a bit worried that we might be besmirching the late Mr. Julia's reputation.

But in the end, we went light on Raul and hard on this extraordinarily dumb movie whose relentless "funny" techno-futuro-jargon was the screenwriting equivalent of water torture. And we felt buoyed by the happy knowledge that Raul's legacy outlived this early career train wreck of a movie (which was shot on horrible cheap-TV-looking video, no less! Not easy on the eyes).

The Public Pearl TV sketches were inspired by the weird and disturbing fact that this movie was partially bankrolled by a New York PBS affiliate, WNET. It's in the credits! Look! They can't deny it! Think about that next time your local public television station fires up *Riverdance* again and tries to guilt-trip you into cutting them a big check!

- *Bill Corbett*

Chapter 30

#901: The Projected Man

Our second Sci-Fi season stampedes to a start with a rip-roaring tale of politics in the grantmaking world!

Overcoming a crippling lack of screen presence, a scientist named Paul has very nearly perfected technology that will allow the world to transport mice from one side of laboratory to another. His boss Mr. Blanchard wants him to fail; something having to do with blackmail by a guy with the largest eyebrows in Europe. Accordingly, Blanchard sabotages a demonstration in front of a Teutonic dignitary named Lembach who controls mouse-transporting funding decisions; in a hasty rage, Paul tries to project himself into his boss's dining room and messes up. He becomes sort of a half-something, maybe it's a rat now that I think of it, but I wouldn't worry about it too much if I were you. Whatever he is, he has big teeth and even more pockmarks than before.

So, he starts killing people even though he still seems like sort of a rational guy. His old girlfriend (also a pale scientist; everyone in this movie is a pale scientist or a pale grantmaking bureaucrat) tries to talk him out of it, as does his lab assistant, but they're too busy falling in what passes in England for love to make much of an impact on his spiral into the pits of semi-rat hell. He's dead by the end, and you know what? I was basically fine with that.

Host Segments

Prologue: The crew careens through another wormhole, and after some trepidation as to where they're gonna end up this time, they find themselves back on present-day Earth. "We can see Ethan Hawke movies again!"

Segment One: Pearl, Bobo, and Brain Guy are moving into an old castle, a castle which Pearl finds strangely familiar. There's an organ; she plays it expertly, with the SOL folks clapping in baseball park unison. Then, of course, she sends them a movie.

Segment Two: The 'Bots "project" various treasured items of Mike's into some sadly unspecified location, never to return. (It's hard to avoid the conclusion that they're just being mean.)

Segment Three: On the SOL, Mike on the phone tries to get Lembach to stay (it has to do with the movie). In the castle, Pearl discovers a book, an ancient history of her family: "I have a feeling I'm on to something here, Nelson. Some power, some force beyond my control. And it doesn't look good for you!"

Segment Four: Crow gets the touch of death and kills Mike - or does he!?

Segment Five: On the SOL, Mike turns down Servo's grant request and okays Crows poorly-conceived one. This upsets Servo, as you can imagine. In the castle, Pearl exults in her newfound castle; Bobo and Brain Guy march and chant.

Stinger: The former girlfriend: "Lembach is staying in London for another few days!"

Reflections: Paul, played by Bryant Haliday, is of course familiar to MST viewers as the guy who played The Great Vorelli in last year's *Devil Doll*. I guess Haliday was considered to be someone who could carry a film. I don't know much about movies, but in mid-1960s England they must have been about three million years behind the music.

I believe this is the first movie we've ever done in which the monster's name was Paul. And believe it or not, it won't be the last.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 31

#902: Phantom Planet

Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you *Phantom Planet*, one of 270 million cheap sci-fi movies our country churned out during the late Fifties and early Sixties. And what would a early Sixties sci-fi movie be like without a stubborn, chunk-headed American hero? *Phantom Planet* has that covered in the person of Captain Frank Chapman, who crash-lands on a mysterious planet full of Lilliputian-sized people. Chapman involuntarily undergoes shrinkage and winds up their size before he knows it. From there he gets put on trial by the tiny civilization, gets claimed by a Machievellian young woman, fights another chunk-headed guy, falls in love with a mute girl, and helps the wee folk battle the sluggish, cartoon-dog-faced Solarites who periodically attack. All in all, a full day.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike and the 'Bots have an "Andy Rooney-off," pitting their respective Andy Rooney imitations against each other. In the end, no one wins - in fact, we all pay dearly.

Segment One: Down in Castle Forrester, Pearl, Observer, and Bobo unpack the Doomsday Machine they ordered from Spiegel. Turns out it requires some assembly. The radioactive core of the device accidentally gets sent to the SOL, where Servo and Crow want to keep it as a pet.

Segment Two: Servo tries to take the advice of the doomed

astronaut in the movie, and fix his attention on “the good and the beautiful.” He does this by staring at various combinations of delicious food items and photographs of sexy starlets, thereby missing the point entirely, as Servo is wont to do.

Segment Three: On the SOL, Mike takes a space walk and Crow forgets to reel him back in. Down in Castle Forrester, Pearl and Observer continue struggling to put the Doomsday Device together. They hear ghastly, ghostly noises echoing through the halls and get all scared. And - what do you know! - it turns out to be Bobo yawning and accidentally dragging a chain around.

Segment Four: Inspired by the look of the planet’s control panels in the movie, Crow and Servo set up an array of water glasses and practice playing. Mike innocently shows them up with his virtuoso playing, temporarily upsetting the ‘Bots, what with their fragile self-esteem.

Segment Five: Crow dresses as a Solarite from the movie, sending him into a spiral of existential doubt about what he really is all about.

On earth, Pearl has despaired of ever finishing the device, and her confidence as an evil world conqueror is shaken. But she’s cheered by a mob of villagers apparently storming the castle - that must mean she’s a threat. Her heart sinks when she learns that the peasants are there merely to welcome them to the neighborhood.

Reflections: For those of you who follow such things, we found *Phantom Planet* eerily redolent of the beginning of last

season. For one thing, it featured Colleen Grey, otherwise known as *The Leech Woman* (Episode #802) playing another devious vixen. And it had more than a passing resemblance to *The Mole People* (Episode #803) - the same tiny fake-cavernous set standing in for an entire underground civilization, and the same old-guys-in-robes factor. In this case, the main old guy was played by Francis X. Bushman, who in his younger days was a silent movie star (featured in the silent version of *Ben-Hur*). Would that *Phantom Planet* had retained more of a dignified silence.Though a pretty good movie for the show, I think, it had many scenes of non-stop expositional chat, which gives us all here a collective migraine when trying to write the show. On the plus side of this movie, however: John Agar was conspicuously absent!

- Bill Corbett

Chapter 32

#903: The Pumaman

Within the context of our world, this is actually a cheerful little film, what with guys being hurled mysteriously off tall buildings and Donald Pleasence strolling around in a silvery muumuu. The villains, of whom Donald is the leader of course, want to find the real Puma Man, an Aztec god sort of personage who they figure has moved to swingin' London. He can be identified by throwing him off a building and observing how he survives: Puma Men fly, see, so they definitely have a leg up on real pumas.

Puma Man turns out to be the wispy Tony Farms, and he is identified by a hulking yet gentle Aztec named Vadinho. They become fast friends, once Tony manages to get past Vadinho throwing him out a window and learns to ignore the palpable condescension that characterizes Vadinho's attitude towards him. Together, they uncover Donald's plan to dominate the world through controlling the minds of all the world's (male) leaders. This he does by slapping together *papier-mâché* models of their heads and staring at them (the models or the real heads; either seems to work) intently from behind plexiglas.

Vadinho teaches Tony how to hang awkwardly from strings and how to play dead when threatened, and with these two skills firmly in hand Tony defeats Donald, albeit with Vadinho stepping in when something especially difficult or physical needs doing.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo has "short man's disease." Fortunately, it's treatable with baby aspirin.

Segment One: Pearl plans an elaborate ball, inviting everyone in the vicinity to her new castle; Brain Guy plans a little get-together at the same time, with Ortega and his cousin Staci the first guests. Pearl forces the Mike and the 'Bots to mingle among themselves; Servo is the only one who gets into it.

Segment Two: With the help of hairdresser Shellie the Nanite, Mike opts for "the dry look." His head becomes extremely dry.

Segment Three: Crow and Servo force Mike to don a silly costume and declare him to be "Coatimundi Man." He has all the attendant powers of the mighty coatimundi.

Segment Four: Crow and Servo create a replica of the head of Roger Whitaker, but Mike can't think of anything to do with him even though they control him now. Crow and Servo, peeved, threaten to sic Roger Whitaker on Mike.

Segment Five: In the wake of the movie, Crow resigns, and then immediately returns and is granted a free-lance position at lower pay with no benefits. In the castle, Pearl's party is a bust, while Brain Guy's is a huge success; then Roger Whitaker shows up and charms the heck out of Pearl.

Reflections: I'm the only one amongst the writers who believes the people behind *The Pumaman* intended humor in the very geeky way Tony flies, what with his unremarkable

limbs waggling all over and his sad cape coupled incongruously with his JCPenney slacks. Everyone else believes the filmmakers were deadly serious from the get-go.

On the other hand I do agree with the other writers that it would have been unpleasant to spend much time kissing Tony Farms, an activity portrayed rather a great deal in the movie. Bridget and Mary Jo were especially vehement on this point, I recall.

I was in Mexico once and saw a coatimundi. Yep.

- *Paul Chaplin.*

Chapter 33

#904: Werewolf

This movie is about werewolves - also known as wolf-men, lycanthropes, and bad actors with latex and spirit-gummed hair on their faces. The movie starts off promisingly enough, what with having Joe Estevez (brother of Martin Sheen, and uncle of Emilio Estevez and Charlie Sheen, one or both of whom will surely turn up in an MST movie one day) on an archeological dig with some other sweaty, disgruntled guys. Their strangely-accented foreman (Mexican? Russian? Basque?) is a clear homicidal maniac from the get-go, and while he applies corporal punishment to one of the workers for being rough with a newly-found bunch o' bones, the hapless digger gets gored by one of said bones. Feh!...Wouldn't you know it, it's a bunch o' werewolf bones. Psh! So pretty soon the guy starts lycanthropizing all over the place. And one naturally assumes he is the eponymous "werewolf" of this film. Wrong! One would be making an ass out of you and me, assuming that! His friends efficiently shoot him, and he's outa the movie! See you! Then about halfway through the film, another strangely-accented man (a self-declared "writer" - his blunt assertion to this effect is all the evidence we have of his craft) shows up and becomes the real werewolf, killing with abandon and simultaneously falling in love with the most heavily-strangely-accented person of all, a piece of Euro-arm-candy with the acting skills of a seriously injured box turtle. The werewolf/writer rampages through Flagstaff, Arizona, and lots of pool is played by the indeterminate foreigners at a local honky-

tonk.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike thinks he's James Lipton, host of the cable hit *Actors Studio* program. He also thinks Crow is Ray Liotta, and interviews him within an inch of his life.

Segment One: Crow applies the clown hammer to Mike/ James Lipton. Mike snaps out of it and immediately remembers their escape opportunity, since the SOL is in geosynchronous orbit around earth. He'll use a giant ladder and climb down!

On the planet, Pearl, Bobo, and Observer are greedily eating their breakfast cereal. Mike manages to land on the worst place on earth - Castle Forrester! Pearl has Brain Guy whip up a lit cannon to dispatch him.

Segment Two: Mike and Servo play the fun game "Who Would You Want in Your Werewolf Movie?" Inspired by Joe Estevez, all the actors they choose are brothers of famous people! Get it? Thank you.

Segment Three: After watching the heart-wrenching scene where a werewolf drives a car and crashes fatally, Mike and the 'Bots make the odd choice to sing a 1960s girl-group song about it.

Segment Four: Mike cuts himself on Crow and becomes a WERECROW.

Segment Five: Mike is further along in his development as a WERECROW. Meanwhile, Servo is beginning to turn into a WEREMIKE.

Down in Castle Forrester, Pearl has decided to create her own werewolf by injecting the essence of a wolf into a man! Brain Guy delivers a peasant, but Bobo's search for a wolf results in an adorable little cocker spaniel. Thwarted, they retire for the day.

Stinger: Addled-brained Euro-model: "Diss iss obsaluttly fussinading." (Trans.: "This is absolutely fascinating.")

Reflections: Oh, sweet, wonderful *Werewolf*. Where to begin? OK, in no particular order:

Accents galore, resulting in myriad pronunciations of the word "werewolf": E.g., "wurwilf," "warwulf," and so on.

The house caretaker - who is some weird hybrid of Jerry Garcia and a Michigan Militiaman - singing his signature top-forty hit, "Strange Things A-Doin'."

The many werewolf looks this movie presents: Sometimes simply a wolf, other times a kind of man-bear, other times a sort of fruit bat puppet, and at still other times just a guy with the mumps overdue for a shave.

The main archeologist earnestly and somberly presenting his theory of how werewolves must "sleep nose to anus."

I could go on, as you could, too, I'm sure.

A few bits of MST trivia:

Werewolf is the newest movie we've ever done (1995).

The cute cocker spaniel at the end of segment five is Humphrey, Kevin's dog, who readers of the *MST Amazing Colossal Episode Guide* will recognize as the photo op dog at

the end of the book in Kevin's, Trace's, Mike's, Mary Jo's, Paul's, & Jim's arms.

Finally, as writer who tries to actually write, and knowing many like me (many right in this very Best Brains office!), I will be filing a class-action suit on behalf of us all for this movie's premise that its doorknob protagonist is a man of the pen. Sure, I know the guy has problems what with his sporadic turning into a werewolf and all, but, for instance, Mike kept writing even when he sprained his ankle. They're feeding you lies about us, I say!

- *Bill Corbett*

Chapter 34

#905: The Deadly Bees

Vicky, a British pop sensation, collapses in the middle of a sensational new smash pop hit and is sent by her manager to recuperate on a bee farm. Yes, there was a room available. There, she encounters a depressed bee farmer, Mr. Hargrove, his depressed wife, and an even more depressed dog who can think of nothing but eating. Then there's a despondent tavern-keeper who doubles as a sort of policeman, and a seriously dispirited rival beekeeper who looks like one of those weird kids we all grow up with, only this one is in his forties.

Try as Vicky might, she just can't recuperate in this idyllic setting. The depressed dog is killed by bees, as is the depressed Mrs. Hargrove. Everybody looks pasty and stern, but nobody can figure anything out until the end, when Vicky realizes which of this dispirited bunch is the real killer. She too is almost killed along the way, of course, but she survives. Seems like that should have made me feel better than it did. Odd movie.

Host Segments

Prologue: A series of "previously on the Satellite of Love" vignettes: "Answer the question, skel!" Things like that.

Segment One: In the castle, Bobo and Brain Guy are relaxing when the two other Observers suddenly show up and reclaim Brain Guy. Pearl is very, very huffy upon

learning that he's leaving.

Segment Two: Crow writes a sonnet to Mrs. Hargrove, a.k.a. the "cigarette hag": "I love you, filter, flavor, pack or box."

Segment Three: Brain Guy packs, and Pearl and Bobo sing him a song to try to get him to stay: "Please staaay, we are your friends, through our brains are not in pans..."

Segment Four: Mike dresses like a bee and tries to communicate like them, with movement. He turns out to be very good at it.

Segment Five: Brain Guy fights off the Observers in a battle of brains and banishes them to Wisconsin, where they must become mortal Packer fans. An odd fellow with a bowler walks through both settings, too.

Stinger: Mrs. Hargrove: "The dog's meat, have you seen it?"

Reflections: In a way you have to admire the idea that a movie might be centered so purposefully and irretrievably on dreariness, and still presume to hold an audience's attention. It's an old-fashioned notion, I think, or British.

We do seem to have entered a British epoch in MST history. This is not the result of any grand plan, I assure you; it would have been just as easy to have found ourselves with a pile of Venezuelan pictures.

In general very little of what happens around here results from planning. Things just happen, and I find that a good approach to life. Usually everything turns out okay, and when it doesn't if you just wait a little bit, then it does. You

may have to adjust your concept of “okay” along the way, but that’s healthy.

- *Paul Chaplin*

A WILLIAM ALLAND PRODUCTION
The SPACE CHILDREN
COPYRIGHT © 1958 BY PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION
AND WILLIAM ALLAND PRODUCTIONS, INC.

Chapter 35

#906: The Space Children

As is the case with most of our films, everybody's depressed in *The Space Children*. A bunch of guys are working on "The Thunderer," a new kind of nuke; they live in piping hot trailers on a desolate California beach with their wives and children. Everybody hates everybody; the most cheerful character is a racist xenophobe played by Jackie Coogan.

As might be expected, the children (ages 5 to 41) are soon contacted by a blob from space. The blob guides them in the ways of sabotaging the military, and by the end The Thunderer is in ruins, the blob flies away, and everyone's left still in need of counseling and trying to sort out some truly strange theology.

Russell Johnson is in the film, too.

The movie's preceded by a short feature, *Century 21 Calling*, that concerns some very white kids drenching themselves in the phone technology of the future, from the vantage point of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo has a kissing booth, and Mike buys a budget kiss, only $49.99

Segment One: Pearl wires the castle and the SOL with a new phone system, so she can take over the world better with more efficient officing. It doesn't work very well.

Segment Two: Mike silently imitates the grinning, pointing star of the short. Crow and Servo take him down, hard.

Segment Three: Mike and the 'Bots fail to launch a model rocket, although they do succeed in blowing up Mike. Pearl has a real rocket and plans to launch Bobo; to train him, she spins him in a faulty centrifuge.

Segment Four: Crow introduces a sexy fashion line of very skimpy fashions meant to be worn by Jackie Coogan.

Segment Five: The blob from the movie shows up and makes Servo destroy his nuclear weapon. Pearl launches the rocket but Bobo's not in it. It destroys the castle and kills them all. Or does it?

Stinger: Russell Johnson staring.

Reflections

It really is true that the one thing uniting our films is depression. In at least 70% of them the characters are just dejected, and they live in brown, stultifying surroundings. The most famous example is perhaps *High School Big Shot*, a movie we did several years ago on some other cable channel in which the last image is a guy hanging (by a rope, I mean, around his neck) from his dining room chandelier.

The same actor also turns up in *I Was A Teenage Werewolf*, from Season Eight, where he also plays a depressing dad. And, he's the same guy who plays the taciturn fellow waiting for a bus at the beginning of the cropduster scene in *North By Northwest.*

- Paul Chaplin

Chapter 36

#907: Hobgoblins

The vast, deserted movie lot of a once-prominent Hollywood film studio is home to a vicious group of furry, grinning, toothy little aliens who read their victims' minds and kill them by making their dreams come true. But I've got this week's show to talk about, so I'll get back to that situation later.

I'm kidding, of course. That IS the story of *Hobgoblins*. There's a lot more, too. Why, there's a nerd who's really into phone sex; a mean guy with a van who delights in beating up his friends; a wiry slut with a perpetual sneer and her uptight never-been-blanked friend; an old janitor, a bad nightclub emcee, and a hairy bouncer, and all this disparate crew are united by two very important things: They can't act and I don't care about them.

Neither will you, once you've seen this movie.

Oh, I forgot, there's our requisite hero who doesn't do anything. Other than that I can't remember anything about him.

Just so this summary does its job, here's the basic outline: These hobgoblins escape the studio, follow a rookie security guard home, and all his friends are nearly killed by their perverted fantasies. Following a long scene at a "strip" club that simply does not even vaguely fulfill its stated premise, the hobgoblins somehow get back to the studio (I honestly forget how and I refuse to go look again) where a crotchety

older security guard who's been keeping them trapped for decades saves the day by blowing them up.

Which, of course, begs the question as to why he didn't do that a long time ago, but you won't have enough energy to ask that question, believe me.

Host Segments

Prologue: Everyone on the SOL is turning each other on, even though (like Robert Palmer) they don't mean to.

Segment One: Pearl needs the SOL to store a couch for her, and they immediately don pajamas and begin jumping on it. In retaliation, she sends them *Hobgoblins*.

Segment Two: Crow produces an instruction film for young men on how to treat women. His only real claim is that they don't exist.

Segment Three: Crow sets up a crisis hotline for people watching the movie. Bobo calls with his own kind of crisis - he's in love with a woman of another species. *Does he mean Pearl?*

Segment Four: Mike has a brilliant plan: They all escape while decoying Pearl with cardboard cut-outs of themselves while a crude tape plays. It nearly works, too.

Segment Five: Servo goes back in time and kicks Rick Sloane in the shins; Crow reads an interview with Sloane wherein he says being kicked by a robot gave him the inspiration to do the movie. In the castle, Bobo and Brain Guy are jumping on the couch, which makes Pearl quietly yet seethingly angry.

Stinger: Several shots of the hobgoblins driving a golf cart.

Reflections

Oh, man. You have no idea the torture it was to watch this movie several times in the space of a week. It shoots right to the top of the list of the worst movies we've ever done. Speaking personally, the only one I hated as much was probably *Overdrawn At The Memory Ban*k, and even that experience bred a less intense sort of hate, leaving an aftertaste not quite so malignant and foul.

On the bright side, there's potential for a real peace in Northern Ireland for the first time in living memory. At least this movie did nothing to prevent that.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 37

#908: The Touch of Satan

Pause-ville, baby.

Other than that, this is the charming story of a perfectly normal non-film-star type of fellow named Jody who stumbles onto a walnut ranch that's actually a direct entryway into a world of witches and devil-worship. The "daughter," Melissa, who looks oh so fetching in her little skirts, is actually over 120 years old. Her wildly wrinkled and murderous "great grandmother" is actually her sister Lucinda; way back when, see, a crowd of lethargic locals wanted to burn Lucinda at the stake, believing, correctly, that she was a witch. So Samantha saved her by selling her soul to the devil.

The people who are apparently her parents? It's unclear who they are. It's never really explained. They may just be walnut farmers who happen to own a witch.

So, Jody saves Melissa from the Devil by sleeping with her, in a scene particularly devoid of sensuality and chest hair; but since it turns out Melissa is then going to die, he then sells his and her soul back to the Devil. The paperwork must have been a nightmare.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow and Servo go a-wassailing. Since Mike has no wassail, they get his debit card and PIN number.

Segment One: Mike finds some canned wassail. In the

castle, Pearl is gone and has left Brain Guy and Bobo with a baby-sitter, Steffi. She treats Brain Guy like a little boy, and Bobo like a dog. “No! No chew!”

Segment Two: Mike tries being a walnut farmer and is immediately unbelievably sweaty, like the guy in the movie. Servo’s a pecan farmer, and is not sweaty at all.

Segment Three: Crow’s convinced he’s a witch, and has Mike bury him in rocks; by the end he’s convinced he’s a frog.

Segment Four: Servo’s deadly grandma tries to kill Mike with a pitchfork.

Segment Five: Crow sells his soul, by mistake, to “Stan,” an accountant, who resells it to Citicorp. In the castle, Steffi reads to Brain Guy and disciplines Bobo. “No! No bark!!”

Stinger: Melissa: “This is where the fish lives.”

Reflections

Much to the delight of a handful of people around the globe, this movie treated us to a repeat appearance by one Robert Easton. Yes, Robert Easton, who played the creepy farmer in *Giant Spider Invasion*. You’ll no doubt recall him by repeating to yourself, “You been the hittin’ the booze again, Ev?”

In this movie, he’s the ringleader of the witch-burning crowd.

Interesting fellow, this Robert Easton. He’s been a Hollywood dialect coach for years, and in fact was a guest several times on *The Tonight Show*, during the Johnny

Carson years, showing off his skill at dialects. He's been in some real movies, too, like *Working Girl* and *Primary Colors*, in which he played John Travolta's doctor.

I like this Robert Easton. I thought he was really good in *Giant Spider Invasion*. Even when the spider was stuffing him up its butt, he played the role convincingly.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 38

#909: Gorgo

This wormy layer of filmic offal from the Sceptred Isle portrays something not to be seen in England again until the administration of Margaret Thatcher: A prehistoric monster laying waste to the entire nation.

We start in Ireland where William Sylvester runs a salvage operation. You'll remember Mr. Sylvester from his performance as the plank of wood in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and as the generous portion of spiral-cut ham in our own *Riding with Death*. Volcanic activity causes a strange island to emerge off the Irish coast, nearly destroying the ship and ending the film before it starts. We are not so lucky. Sylvester - or "Sly" as I like to call him - and his mate Joe put in at a small bitter seaport filled with contrary Gaelic icthyophiles and a harbor master who looks a LOT like Samuel Beckett. They become embroiled in a subplot that goes nowhere and makes *Finnegan's Wake* look terse and lucid, and befriend a wee laddie who in this film replaces the characteristic *überkinder* prevalent in Japanese monster films.

Somewhere about three hours into the film, Gorgo appears, cute little bugger, and is quickly and impossibly captured by Sly and Joe and the little Irish kid and brought to London to become an attraction in a circus run by a man with the delightfully provocative name of Dorkin. Ah, but we find that Gorgo himself is a child, and his mom, Gorgette I guess, flattens whole city blocks and murders countless millions on

her way to a sweet reunion with her adorable spawn.

Filmed loudly and badly, *Gorgo* still brought us joy in the opportunity to go on and on about things which are Dorkin!

Prologue: Crow finds out that his web is the perfect nesting place for the rare Spix's Macaw.

Segment One: Pearl has flown off to Los Angeles to find an ally in the struggle to bring bad films to Mike. She finds Leonard Maltin, who recommends the movie *Gorgo*. The two then get real pissy about lunch.

Segment Two: Based on one character's resemblance to Samuel Beckett, The Satellite of Love presents its own adaptation: "Waiting for Gorgot."

Segment Three: Mike is obsessed with winning the William Sylvester edition of Trivial Pursuit. The 'Bots have a hard time remembering who the hell William Sylvester is, exactly.

Segment Four: Perhaps inspired by today's movie, the Nanites put on a circus! With Nate the clown! Mike puts down his quarter to get in! But he forgets how tiny they are and the Circus is crushed! Horrible death and carnage! Wheee!

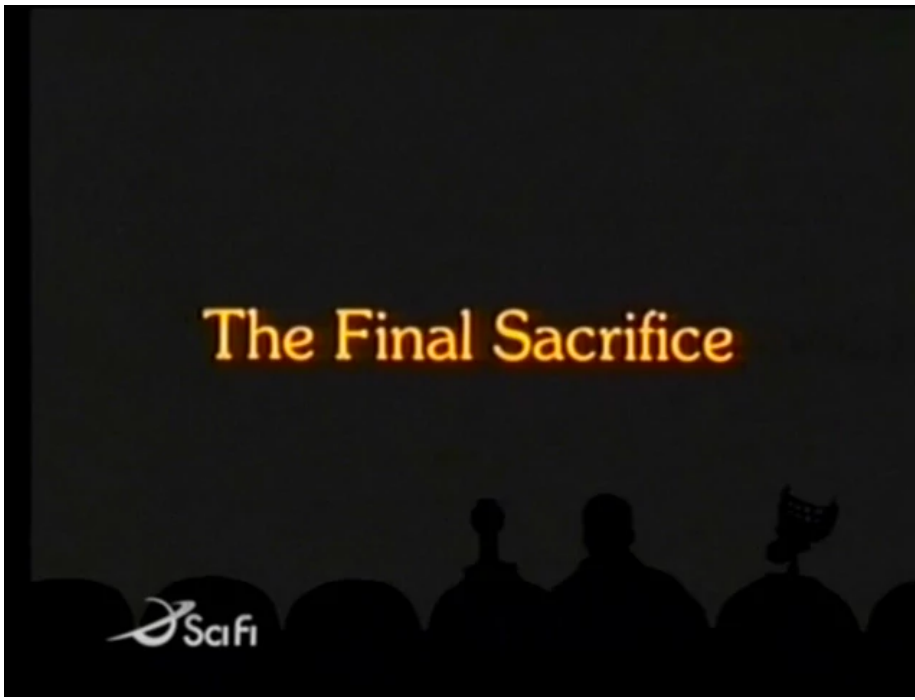
Segment Five: Uh-oh, Crow and Servo have contracted with the mob to make a saucy calendar with the women from today's film. Mike helps the pair scan the film for attractive English and Irish women in our charming backhanded insult to both countries.

Stinger: Incomprehensible fisherman.

Reflections: Leonard Maltin was very nice and sweet and a real pro when he did our show. He learned his lines quickly, had an instant rapport with Mary Jo, and rolled with many changes that came along. He is a charming, affable, thoroughly professional man. Too bad he gave *Gorgo* three stars, the dope.

Now on to *Gorgo*. It intrigues me to note that Steven Spielberg and Michael Crichton based their movie on the notion of a giant prehistoric monster smashing a city to bits while finding its offspring. But it only intrigues me for about a minute, then I work up a good belch and I feel better.

- *Kevin Murphy*



Chapter 39

#910: The Final Sacrifice

This film gives us insight into the banality of banality and would have us believe that murderous cults are a bad thing. Zap Rowsdower is a guy who was in a cult, then he either dropped out or got kicked out -hang on, I gotta go check with Paul Chaplin about the plot of this film.

Sorry, I'm back, he didn't know much about this movie either.

Anyway, Zap Rowsdower befriends Troy, whose father was killed by Zap when Zap was in the cult. Zap took a leave of absence from the cult and does battle with the boss of the cult because the boss wants Zap back in the cult.

Just a sec, I'm gonna go check with Mike Nelson, ask him if he remembers anything about this film...thanks for waiting. Mike was not sure, but was mostly upset about how women were portrayed in the film.

Troy is understandably miffed when he learns that Zap is the guy who is responsible for his father's death. But Zap has turned out to be a good friend, albeit with hockey hair, so what is Troy to do? Somehow at the end, the two become fast friends.

The film was made in Canada, which explains a lot.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo and Crow loot the SOL after a power

outage of a mere second. Their looting is rather fruitless, nay, even counter-productive.

Segment One: Pearl, in a renewed effort to rule the world, tries taking over one person at a time, firstly Todd Gunderson. Servo is next on the list.

Segment Two: Servo constructs an ode to Canada, and manages to turn it into a ripping slam-fest. “Where the hell do they get off sharing a border with us?!?”

Segment Three: Everyone in the castle, as well as Crow and Servo, comes down with hockey hair.

Segment Four: Mike, although immune to the ravages of hockey hair, has come down with Grizzled Old Prospectors disease.

Segment Five: The robots start their own cult, sort of a muffin-y, Ally McBeal kind of cult. Pearl is this close, this close, to taking over Carl.

Reflections: You know what? You lose me straight away when your movie’s protagonist is named “Zap Rowsdower.” The second I hear him identified as “Zap Rowsdower” I am squeezing past you and climbing over your legs and muttering “excuse me” and I am getting the hell out of the movie. Only this time I couldn’t because I was at work and I’m hourly and I had used up all my vacation and sick time. How about Plink Holmgren? Or Pow Flowhauer?

Just between you and me and the wall, I think a major error was made in their film archetype-ology. Zap was clearly supposed to be the intermediary guy; the hard-drinking,

tough-but-lovable, car-won't-start sidekick to the hero.

However, we were short one hero, and it's not till the end of the movie that you realize that Troy and Zap's journey isn't to bring Troy to the hero (to whom Zap should be the sidekick), but in fact, Zap is the hero. Excuse me…sorry…can I just squeeze by you…watch your pop…

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

Chapter 40

#911: Devil Fish

Made in 1984, originally titled *Shark: Rosso nell'oceano*, alternately titled *Devouring Waves*, *Red Ocean*, and *Monster Shark*. I believe that by giving the film four alternate titles, the producers meant to capitalize on the public's pandemic fear of sea-borne hell-spawn. I know I won't soon go swimming with poorly dubbed Italians.

When a gabby, death-deserving couple is consumed whole by an off-screen leviathan, the thin, plucky dolphin teaser Dr. Stella Dickens is brought in to investigate. The creature is hunted by the thin, continually beered-up Dr. West, who discovers a creature of such power and immensity that the film's budget can't ever provide a good shot of it. Sensing they're in over their heads, the pair turn to the thin, tan, beautifully stupid TV repair man Peter (in this film pronounced "pee-der").

But wait, it seems that the monster is the product of a super-mega-uber-corporation run by a Rula Lenska look-alike and a Bill Blass look-alike. Embroiled in an empty marriage, Rula has partnered with another Euro-dope who has engineered this monster in order to rule the sea. Their savagely stupid idea comes unraveled quicker than a Belva Plain novel, and as you might guess, ends in bloodshed.

Ultimately, confusingly and boringly, the monster is lured into the Everglades and set ablaze, along with most of the Everglades. There is so much more, but to devote additional typing energy to the plot would be self-injurious.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike suddenly has found himself without an identity, pursued by agents of a secret government project who have wiped every record of his existence from the face of the earth, and now he's on the run...until Servo and Crow find his wallet for him, and then everything's okay.

Segment One: In true sit-com predicament style, Bobo, Brain Guy, and Pearl have to pretend the Castle is a cruise ship. Mike and the 'Bots make ice sculptures: Servo puts his ice in gin and tonic, Crow makes a huge replica of Michelangelo's David, and Mike tries to weld his. Heh, heh. Our own Patrick and Beez star as the cruise ship couple.

Segment Two: After taunting dolphins for being dumb, Mike and Co. are besieged by a stunningly advanced dolphin spaceship, and they recant every bad thing they said about dolphins. We learn that most dolphins are named "Blowie."

Segment Three: An electrician comes to the SOL to effect repair, and Mike taunts him. Accordingly, the giant dolphin spaceship comes to the electrician's aid. We learn that dolphins have a strategic alliance with electricians. This is absolutely true, don't doubt it.

Segment Four: Pearl has created a device to make Mike and the 'Bots appear more Italian to the naked eye, in what might be our most culturally insensitive sketch to date.

Segment Five: In Castle Forrester, Pearl can barely hold her cruise ship scam together, with Bobo as captain. Bobo blows a cog, erupts in a violent hail of breakfast cereal and must

be darted several times to calm him down. A special nod to Bill Corbett for his portrayal of Brain Guy portraying Isaac from *The Love Boat*.

Stinger: Beery Doctor West says "I knowww!" Man, that's laugh-out-loud funny.

Reflections

Our own Peter Rudrud has been plugging his ears each time we pass and cry out "Pee-derrrr!" Boy, is that fun to do. Try it on your friends! You'll find it works best on people named "Peter," but what the hell, let it loose on your Gramma, or your parole officer.

It is a film like this that gives us license to Euro-bash until the sun goes down. Here we have represented Italy, England, Sweden, Germany, and I believe Andorra. Mix these together in Florida, with a cast and crew which collectively speak enough English to purchase Budweiser and Moon Pies, give them skimpy bathing suits and a bunch of camera equipment and you will naturally produce enough Euro-bashing cannon fodder to last at least two decades. What we do is as natural as your own hair.

And finally, a salute to whatever PR officer signed the Coast Guard up to bend WAY over and take it in the Stokes Basket for this film. It seems that a full complement of Coast Guard helicopters was made available to this production without even a faint hint of mob involvement. So the next time I make a pathetic European movie involving stupid rubber monsters terrorizing our waterways, I'll know who to call! *Semper Paratus*!

Your Humble Servant,

- *Kevin Murphy*

Chapter 41

#912: The Screaming Skull

Short Summary: *Robot Rumpus* stars Gumby, of "dammit" fame. Gumby is a strange, disturbingly high-crotched, nude green clay figure. He has elephantine legs tapering up to a thin, flat body, on top of which is perched a head which resembles a moss-covered Chippendale chair as designed by Salvador Dali, in that one side appears to be melting.

In this adventure, Gumby and his equestrian friend Pokey - who at least in some sense looks like a true horse - making us wonder what Gumby is technically supposed to be, dammit: A reanimated blob of spearmint gum? Sentient mucus? Well anyway, he and Pokey enslave some robots to do yardwork. Gumby's mother, who wears clothes, is very pleased with her son's ingenuity, as long as it's working. But the robots run horribly amuck. They start tearing down the whole world, dammit! Mom summons Dad, who is named Gumbo, though I fail to see his resemblance to the tasty shrimp, okra, and sausage soup I had in New Orleans. (Gumbo also runs around naked, in this universe with no rules.)

But Gumbo gets trounced by the robots until finally Gumby finds a way to kill them. The delightful movie climaxes with the maiming and dismemberment of many robots, and the white-hot rage of Gumby's parents, who by story's end have taught their son that their love is always highly conditional on his success in finding innovations in yardwork. And that his failure in yardwork endeavors will be met by blistering

punishment and the withholding of their love, replaced by the purest of hate. I'm glad I grew up watching this stuff.

Movie Summary: *The Screaming Skull*...Or (my preferred title), "I Swear Before All That Is Good And Holy I Will Never Watch Another Movie Starring The Twisted Worry-Faced Mother From The Space Children (Episode #906) Ever, Ever Again, With God As My Witness."

The story: A shifty creep and his pathological worrywart of a new bride move into a Southern mansion owned by his late wife, and now bequeathed to him. His deceased wife died recently from a bashed-in head, under mysterious circumstances. This brand-new groom's new wife is loaded with family money too, and is more than a little unstable.

That is to say: HE'S GUILTY! HE'S REALLY, REALLY GUILTY! HEY EVERYONE, HE'S GUILTY!...This is clear in the first ten minutes or so of the movie, but they go on spending an hour of our valuable time pretending there's some real mystery at hand. Mr. Creepyhusband tries to drive his wife batty by putting skulls in odd places. Mrs. Looneywife repeatedly contorts her face in horrible twisty fear (this is the scariest effect in the movie, by far) and bores us to tears walking around looking for things in a nightgown (making me think as I watched it: No, movie, yeah I know you're from the Fifties and all so we have to cut you some slack, but I will never accept this fear-furrowed woman in her twelve-layer peignoir as sexy. Damn you for even suggesting it!).

Anyways, some pie-faced minister and his mannish wife

hang around a lot listening intently and absorbing little. And a slow-witted, Snagglepuss-sounding, Torgo-Lite gardener named Mickey is tossed into the mix for a highly unsuccessful red herring.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo turns into a butterfly. Apparently all along the Servo we knew had been a mere larva of what he was destined to be eventually.

Segment One: Down in Castle Forrester, Pearl, Observer, and Bobo run around in penguin suits, pathetically trying to pull a practical joke on Mike and the 'Bots, convincing them that they'd agreed to meet them there, also with penguin costumes on. Mike and the 'Bots throw together some makeshift animal costumes of their own, and everyone looks pretty dumb in the end. (An editorial: As an MST performer, what I find most refreshing about acting on this show is the inherent dignity of the work: Where else would one find the challenge to one's "craft" of playing a fey omniscient albino alien who then dresses up in a goofy penguin suit? Go to hell, Shakespeare!...This is the real stuff.)

Segment Two: The 'Bots work through the trauma of having to watch Gumby mutilate robots by having their own clay figure show.

Segment Three: Servo tries to scam a free coffin, as guaranteed at the beginning of *The Screaming Skull* for people who die of fright (not boredom) while watching this movie.

Segment Four: Now Crow tries to pull a joke, becoming

a Screaming Skull and frightening Mike. Mike freaks out and bashes both the 'Bots with a variety of sporting goods, screaming himself the whole time.

Segment Five: Servo's coffin arrives. He has to pay the full delivery cost of returning it. But no harm is done, as he uses Mike's credit card for this. Down in Castle Forrester, Bobo dresses like a ape, trying to fool them that he is an ape - that is, an ape other than Bobo. At Pearl's request, Brain Guy makes him tiny. Why? See below.

Reflections: I dearly love my job and my colleagues here, but permit me to whine a bit, as I am very skilled and practiced at it. To wit: Sometimes I wonder if we here at Best Brains aren't the butt of our own joke. While producing a show about a man and his robots who are tortured by watching bad movies, we have become the real-life victims of our own smarty-pants premise. Why do I say this? Answer: *The Screaming Skull*. Making someone watch this even once is specifically outlawed by the Geneva Convention. But many, many times, as is our practice? That is the custom-fitted hell that we've brought upon ourselves, worthy of a wry introduction by Rod Serling. I found this movie to be the Deepest of Hurting: Like watching bacteria grow in extra-slow motion. This situation, I would contend, is true irony, Classic Greek in nature - unlike the Alanis Morrisette version, which applies the word to slight inconveniences and minor gross-outs. (By this Morrisettian standard, then, it is "ironic" when one of her songs come on my favorite FM station.) Thank you, my whining is over and I am happy again.

The Gumby short, on the other hand, was a complete party to do. Good clean fun, though disappointingly short at six minutes. I always loved the shorts as a fan of the show, and hope we can get more.

Other things: We all loved doing Segment Four - the Crow-as-Screaming-Skull - though I ruined a few takes by cracking up at Mike as he carefully chose a golf club while yelling in stark terror.

The segment five bit of Brain Guy shrinking Bobo down into his fist was completely off the slight story we had, but we got excited at it as a sort of tribute to the many MST3K movies that have used this cheap forced-perspective effect. I think we were no more successful than they were - I kept trying to see it as something other than Bobo standing on the other side of the room, but could not. But it was fun to try, and fun is the most important meal of the day.

Lastly, a stunning acting debut by Barb Tebben, as the officious free-coffin representative for AIP. Barb literally phoned in her performance, which made us not want to cross her. Those of you who have dealt with Barb on the phone or taken the Best Brains tour know that she is the nicest person in the world, but: There's obviously some demon inside her that I wouldn't wanna tangle with. Don't hit me, Barb!

- *Bill Corbett*

Chapter 42

#913: Quest of the Delta Knights

Simply, the Delta Knight movie by which all other Delta Knight movies must be judged.

Anyway there's a secret organization called the Delta Knights. They live in Europe: England, Italy, whatever. Their quest is to find some kind of secret (of course) storehouse of Archimedes, the implication being that Archimedes was the greatest of all those bearded philosophers. Maybe he was, who am I to question.

The particular Delta Knights with whom we are forced to be concerned are young "T," and old "Baydool," and Leonardo da Vinci. There is a harlot who turns out to be a princess; T and Leo both fall in love with her, à la *Star Wars*; not à la *Star Wars* there've been no sequels to explore this little trio.

The heroes battle a mean woman (Olivia Hussey) and her cruel warriors who dress like feathered bats; in the end they discover the storehouse of Archimedes and destroy it. This is ostensibly wise. Leo's pissed, but swipes most of his best ideas anyway.

Host Segments

Prologue: Gypsy takes the hail-damaged Crow in for repairs, and Mike and Servo are left with a beater loaner

Crow.

Segment One: Crow returns. Pearl announces her dissatisfaction with Mike's relative lack of misery, and trades places with him. Bobo and Brain Guy taunt Mike.

Segment Two: Pearl, although adored by Tom and Crow for having given them a mint, decides to leave. Mike is having a great guy time with Bobo and Brain Guy, but has no choice. The 'Bots are real disappointed with Mike's return.

Segment Three: A quartet of Tom Servo's in madrigal robes sing: "A sweet Delta Lady, I do what I please; I'm strong and I'm savvy and I've got these!"

Segment Four: Leonardo da Vinci shows up. He lives in Queens now, though still dressed in robes; he's tough and doesn't like Servo at all.

Segment Five: Mike helps Tom and Servo deal with their grief over Pearl's absence. In the castle, the modern-day Delta Knights hold a huge pancake breakfast.

Reflections: The pancake breakfast scene involved the most extras ever in any of our sketches, and word of that fact had apparently leaked out before the show's airing. We certainly hope no one expected a chariot race or a reenactment of the Battle of Shiloh or something along those lines. Hey, this was hard enough.

We're all pretty gun-shy about hail damage here at Best Brains. Most of our cars were destroyed by hail back in May, and I'm still dickering with the insurance company over damages to my house. They're threatening to just total it out

and give me the Blue Book value, which means I'll be living in an '89 Toyota before long.

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 43

#1001: Soultaker

In a time and place much like our own, only it's the Eighties, a balding JD named Brad picks up a dreamy guy whose full name, I happen to have just noticed, is Zachary Taylor, the same as our twelfth president. Everyone calls him Zack, though, and he's not very presidential, but he is dreamy, I'll give him that.

Zachary Taylor and Brad pick up goofy eunuch Tommy and head off to a summer festival in town. A real looker named Natalie (Vivian Schiller, who also wrote the screenplay) arrives separately and begins seeking out Zack. Zack does the same in return, despite the strenuous objections of trusted advisor Brad, who proclaims Natalie a rich bit*h and too good for Zack. When Natalie's stranded by her friend (who fulfills her female role by heading off with the first male who crosses her line of sight), Zack, Natalie, Brad, Tommy, and a goofy girl pile into Brad's car and that is when the movie really starts.

See, I haven't even mentioned yet that we've also seen Joe Estevez and Robert Z'Dar appear and disappear at odd intervals all this time. They're Angels of Death. They appear, point at our protagonists, and then Joe walks out in front of Brad's speeding car and causes an accident! Everybody's dead! Or are they? NO!

Oh, it gets complicated. Estevez tries to take their post-accident souls, and can't get Tommy's and Natalie's and Zack's; that's because they're not dead! Wow! Instead, they

wander invisibly, trying to figure out what the hell is going on, pursued by Estevez, who's egged on by a clearly irritated Z'Dar, and it's all made more complex by Estevez believing he knew Natalie in a past life - or is that the point, we're not sure, maybe she really does just look like someone; and the exact physics of the whole scheme become murkier and murkier and Estevez tries everything but can't get the job done. He is a terrible Angel of Death. I mean I'm no expert, but come on.

He even tries becoming Natalie's mom - have I mentioned these guys are shape-shifters? - and that leads to some weird incestuous lesbian implications that I don't think the movie's makers really meant to get into, but they wrote themselves into it and it's kinda creepy.

Natalie and Zack end up okay, helped a little by new Angel of Death Brad. That's really all you need to know. Tommy doesn't make it. And I ask, along with you: Who was Tommy again?

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow and Servo hold a wet t-shirt contest. They put some t-shirts in pans of water and can't see what the big deal is. At the end, after Mike says "We'll be right back," nothing happens for a bit. Hm.

Segment One: Upon returning, an a image of Martin Van Buren appears suddenly, followed by an image of Martin Van Buren mixed with that of a gesturing, muffled man, a fellow sharp-eyed viewers might recognize. When Gypsy turns unusually vulgar, all realize that something is wrong,

and they appeal to Pearl. Pearl doesn't care, and only sends them the movie. The theater doors don't work at first.

Segment Two: Gypsy announces that a mysterious ship is keeping pace with the SOL and stalks off crabbily. Mike tries to take control, and fails. "Um...shields up!" (There are no shields.) He breaks the hexfield.

Segment Three: The SOL suddenly begins plummeting, out of control, death is certain. Mike appeals to Pearl, but havoc reigns in the castle as a hooded figure tries to take Bobo's soul. The Soultaker turns out to be TV's Frank, who is in fact dead and is working as an Angel of Death. He explains he was in Second Banana Heaven for a while, "but it was so political up there; Pat Buttram had it in for me right from the start!" Pearl and Frank have a great time catching up and insulting Brain Guy. The SOL's nosedive stops - they've been saved by a beam from the mysterious ship.

Segment Four: Crow and Tom wonder about the mysterious ship, terrified. "Who are you!!!?" cries Crow; the doors open and Joel Robinson appears. Turns out Joel discovered that Dr. Forrester had rigged the ship to self-destruct after ten years, and he came to fix it. Everybody's happy and they all get reacquainted. Joel comments that Crow's voice sounds different, and ascribes it to a new bowling pin. He explains that after he crash-landed in Australia he worked for the band Man Or Astroman for a while, doing pyrotechnics; now he manages a Hot Fish Shop in Osseo. Mike appears and is very impressed with Joel's new job, but is depressed he can't take the overnight cook job, being stuck in space and all. Joel cheers him up.

Segment Five: Joel's about done. He explains a few problems he's found, including some gunk from when Mike tried to patch something with strips of bacon. They check in at the castle and discover Frank, who says that Joel's soul is on his list, so he's going to need that - "you know, when you get a minute." Joel leaves, proclaiming he can't take Mike and the 'Bots because the time he spent on the SOL "made a man outta me and maybe, just maybe, it'll make a man out of you too." Mike is grateful. In the castle, Frank needs a soul, and finally agrees to take Bobo's. Bobo and Frank play ring-toss with Bobo's soul.

Stinger: Natalie's mom (a.k.a. Joe Estevez) stares quizzically though an open door.

Reflections: A major show, to say the least. Obviously I should explain a little about the "Hot Fish Shop." The only Hot Fish Shop I know of was, until very recently, located along Highway 61 in Winona, Minnesota, on the Mississippi. A local landmark, it closed just weeks ago, in fact possibly on the very day this show aired for the first time. I wonder.

Having Joel and Frank around for a few days was cool. I got to sit with Joel just like the old days and run lines with him. We actually did some rewriting as he was getting his makeup done. I like Joel. He's weird, which results in his being funny.

- Paul Chaplin

GIRL IN
GOLD BOOTS
COPYRIGHT © MCMLXVIII BY T.
MIKELS'
PRODUCTIO
NC.
ALL RIGHT
RESERVE

Chapter 44

#1002: Girl in Gold Boots

Buzz, a traveling thug, stops at a diner somewhere in the Nevada nuclear testing grounds and meets Michele, who wants to be a dancer. He suggests she accompany him to Los Angeles, claiming his sister Joan is a famous hoofer. After drunk dad slaps her around, Michele concludes that life with Buzz may be a quarter-step up, so she agrees.

Shortly, they're joined by Critter, a fey man with a guitar. Off they go to the jolly world of striptease and drug dealing that is Los Angeles. Turns out that Joan is an exotic dancer, sort of, and her boss, Leo, the Oiliest Man in the World, deals drugs to school kids. Michele is thrilled. She gets to be a dancer, right next to the famous addict Joan! Maybe she'll even get to be addicted and used and thrown away herself!

There are many many many scenes of dancing. Many, I tell you. Very many.

Critter latches on as a janitor at the club, Buzz falls right into drug dealing, and there's all kinds of tension between Buzz and Critter regarding the attentions of the zaftig Michele. Critter admits to Michele that he's planning to become a draft dodger someday, which for some reason makes it impossible for him to declare his love for her. She keeps dancing and replacing the increasingly addicted Joan, while Leo grins and drips oil.

Buzz takes part in a jailhouse robbery and kills a guy. Critter and Michele find out. (I'm losing interest here, just as I did

while watching the movie). Critter beats up everybody and calls the police and joins the Marines. An ending arrives which is presented as happy.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow wears a WWBSMD bracelet - "What Would Buffy St. Marie Do?" His answer to a hypothetical moral dilemma: Write a folk song. An odd shift to the castle: Pearl warns she's about to become a fully-accredited mad scientist.

Segment One: Pearl tries her darnedest to act like a mad scientist, as a mad scientist inspector is visiting. She shocks Bobo, gives Brain Guy a latex hump, and talks Mike and the 'Bots into overreacting to the movie. When she starts hitting Brain Guy, the inspector nods approvingly.

Segment Two: Crow dresses as Buzz, Servo as Michele; Crow tries to exact revenge (for what? Who knows?) on Mike by making Mike pour beer on his most prized possessions, as in the movie. Those turn out to be Mike's beer stein and then Crow himself.

Segment Three: Crow's legs are all that are visible as he dances provocatively, wearing gold boots, apparently sporting a tiny bikini. Mike's outraged; the 'Bots accuse him of being uncomfortable acknowledging Crow as a sexual creature.

Segment Four: Mimicking the film, Mike sings a folk song in front of a window as it rains. Crow keeps appearing, telling him that the water has caused a fire. Mike's oblivious and sings; Crow and Servo finally extinguish the fire.

Segment Five: Everybody on the SOL dresses like Leo; they're embarrassed. In the castle, the inspector concludes that Pearl's experiment is a failure - until he sees Brain Guy in a dress, dancing. He accredits Pearl as a mad scientist, "conditionally."

Stinger: Joan: "Oh God, I wish I had my pretty mind back."

Reflections: The whole mad scientist accreditation sub-plot has an interesting history. Our overseers at Sci-Fi, both of whom are long gone, fooled themselves into thinking that if we were somehow able to build an over-arching plot into our show, people would start watching it. We didn't like the idea, since the new shows are usually presented several weeks apart and then never again shown in order; and we seem to write better when we don't have to pay attention to stuff like plot. But, we had to do it. It seemed sort of sad, really, because by this time we were already pretty sure we were writing the last season.

We all loved Leo, the club owner. He joins our pantheon of oily guys, where he's welcomed by the likes of the oily guy in a sweater dress, from *Attack of the Eye Creatures*, way back in the Other Years.

The nightclub is called The Haunted House, and has an odd dragon hovering over the stage, emitting smoke from its nostrils. I assume this place actually existed, back in the Sixties. Anybody out there remember it?

- *Paul Chaplin*

Chapter 45

#1003: Merlin's Shop of Mystical Wonders

Merlin's Shop of Mystical Wonders is a couple of movies sewn together with the flimsy thread of a recurring toy monkey. Ernest Borgnine, looking just as fresh and girlish as his *Marty* days, is a large grandpa who's babysitting his grandson and letting him watch whatever he wants on TV. When the power goes out during a storm, Grandpa B is forced to talk to the boy and begins to tell him a story about magical Merlin.

In Grandpa's tale, willowy Merlin now runs a little shop with his rubicund wife, Zurella, in a vague, Los Angeles-y kind of suburb. One day two women with pointy voices come into the shop. After a standard "Hihowareyou," one of the women goes into graphic detail to the other woman about not being able to conceive. The barren woman's husband follows them into the shop; he's a store reviewer and a freelance asshole. He's anxious to blow the lid off little mom & pop shops in strip malls. When the man asks Merlin why the hell the shop even exists, Merlin tells him he wants people "to experience their belief in magic again." Mr. & Mrs. Merlin look at the barren woman knowingly and they give her a wishing stone that looks like malformed Jell-O.

The antagonistic boutique critic threatens to shut down Merlin's shop with a bad review. To appease him, Merlin

gives him a book of magic filled with spells and sorcery. The man and his wife return home: She goes off to bed alone and he goes downstairs to do some officing in his garage. He starts dabbling with the spells in the book and wreaks havoc right and left: He breathes fire, the cat levitates and the devil visits him when he tries to turn the cat into a familiar. As all this is happening our friend is rapidly aging. We cut to Grandpa Borgnine who does some back-pedaling to explain that when you mess with magic it drains your life force and causes you to age.

When the man realizes how close he suddenly is to retirement, he finds the rejuvenation spell to replenish his life force. The recipe calls for fresh blood, which he takes from his pinched and still barren wife. The formula de-oldens him so much so that he becomes an infant. Voila! The woman finally has the baby she's always wanted! On the down side, she has to raise her husband. On the plus side, she's gotten rid of her husband. Or has she? This is upsetting and confusing.

When this story fails to satisfy the kid, Grandpa B spins another wonderful yarn which begins with a thief breaking into Merlin's shop after hours, and stealing the creepy little monkey toy. Out of all the useless stuff in Merlin's show, why the monkey toy? Maybe the other worthless crap had ink tags.

The thief pawns the creepy monkey toy (hereafter, CMT) and a pleasant woman whose name seems like it should be Susan buys it. She goes to a birthday party where she gives the CMT to a child. We don't know who the child is, we don't know what Susan is doing there, we don't know if

she's a girlfriend, we don't know if she's a neighbor, we don't know who the guy is, we don't know if he's the dad of the kid, and we don't know who the other guy is either, and we don't know whose house it is.

Well, anyway...once CMT is in the house, there are foreboding occurrences: Plants die; flies die; goldfish die. These things happen each time the malevolent monkey clashes his cymbals. Meanwhile, Merlin is hunting for his monkey with a police sketch in hand. CMT goes too far when he starts a fire in the garage and kills Sparkle the Dog, the only character who we know who it is. At a loss, Vague Dad Guy (I think his name is David, but it should be Susan) consults a psychic who tells him to GET RID OF THE MONKEY DAVID FOR GOD'S SAKE!

Susan the Dad tries to get rid of the monkey, first by casually throwing it in the garbage. When that fails, he drives out to a deserted area to bury the CMT. But the CMT, smiling ever benevolently, uses his preternatural powers and conjures a violent storm and an earthquake. Susan-man falls into a crevice created by the earthquake, barely escapes with his blandness, and returns home.

Meanwhile, Merlin, as he searching for his monkey toy, just happens to run into a guy who just happens to be a traveling trinket salesman who just happens to have sold Merlin's monkey to an elderly woman who just happens to have paid by check, allowing Merlin to stalk her. In the subplot of a subplot of subplot, Mr. Susan's mother returns home from a vacation. And Grandma has brought a gift for the kid! Hooray! It's the creepy monkey toy! Hell hath no fury like a toy scorned and the CMT brings about another

earthquake. Just as his cymbals are about to clang, Merlin magically appears, stops the CMT, and gently rebukes him for raining hellfire on all around him. By this time the Grandpa B's charge has fallen fast asleep. (Here you may make the obvious joke to yourself or to the person on your right.)

Host Segments

Prologue: The gang on the SOL is into 1920s college pranks. Mike is swallowing goldfish; Servo is stuck in a phone booth with a bunch of other hims; and Crow is flag-pole sitting.

Segment One: Pearl receives orders from the Institute of Mad Science for an experiment to inflict on Mike and Les Bots. The theory is that if one person is given complete power and authority over others, that person will become corrupt. Before Pearl can even finish her hypothesis, Servo has made himself autocratic ruler of the SOL. In a personal touch, Pearl adds a variant to the experiment: Fire ants in the test subject's underwear, thus proving that insects can change the course of governments. Control group Bobo should have had no ants in his pants but, Bobo being Bobo...

Segment Two: Servo and Crow become niche reviewers and review each other. They give each other virulent and vehement thumbs down.

Segment Three: Servo, using a bogus magic book, accidentally turns Mike into an adult baby but Mike doesn't realize it. Mike makes a present for Servo.

Segment Four: Mike has got the entire series of children's

books written by Ernest Borgnine, including “Santa’s Workshop of Shimmering Delights” which is anything but.

Segment Five: Bobo is an ersatz toy monkey, sent up to the SOL by Pearl to wreak havoc and disaster. Pearl calculates their pain quotient, using a variety of standardized scales. Meanwhile, Brain Guy beams Bobo back down to the Castle, where he surreptitiously tries to get Bobo into a large bag. Bobo loves bags!

Stinger: Kid playing with odd monkey toy, lost in some fantasy play world, singing “Rock ‘n roll martian....rock and roll martian...”

Reflections: In just about every movie we’ve ever done, there’s always a moment upon which we writers fixate. We will go back and forth over the same few seconds of movie, frame by frame, and we’ll dissect and discuss the moment. This will happen in each of the four or five viewings of the particular film; and each time we’ll have a long discussion, casting theories and supposing explanations for the odd moment. Or we’ll simply be fascinated by the moment. To wit: “Rock and roll Martian...” We laughed very hard, we played it over and over again, and there was a lot of discussion about what the kid was saying. It sounds like he could be saying “F***ing old Martian...” It seems to be such a pure kid moment - how did they get it on film?

We also loved the psychic taking David to task so virulently. “MY GOD, DAVID!” This was a close second in our choice of stingers. Man, working at MST3K was a fun job...

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

Chapter 46

#1004: Future War

From the future traveled a master race of cyborgs. They made abductions from Earth's past. The dinosaurs were trained as trackers. The humans were bred as slaves. Now a runaway slave escapes to a place his people call heaven…we know it as Earth.

At least this is what the filmmakers claim at the beginning of *Future War*. I figure if anyone knows what their movie's about, it would be the filmmakers, and that's good enough for me. "Runaway" is a human bred by cyborgs and played by Daniel Bernhardt, a B-squad Jean-Claude Van Damme. Runaway escapes his captors aboard a high orbiting spaceship, and drifts ashore to a beach in southern California. As he wanders the mean streets of Orange County, he gets struck by a car driven by a novitiate nun who is also a former hooker and drug dealer. Sister Anne takes the injured Runaway to her former half-way house, which is manned by the very large men who helped her quit dopin' and whorin'.

Meanwhile, killer dinosaurs from the future are tracking down Runaway. The dinosaurs are actually dinosaur puppets shot in forced perspective, creating the illusion of somewhat larger forced perspective dinosaur puppets. These dinosaurs are also fitted with special collars which cause the dinosaurs to explode and disintegrate if they are harmed. The reason for this isn't clear, but I'm sure the filmmakers knew what they were doing.

Sister Anne helps Runaway elude the tracker dinosaurs.

While they run from redressed parking ramp set to redressed parking ramp set, the two form a special bond. While Sister Anne is questioning her faith and her purpose in life, Runaway quotes the Bible to her which really gets her where she lives. Sister Anne has a flashback while she looks at a scrapbook which contains photos of her when she was a streetwalker. I can only guess that her prostitute co-workers were very sentimental and gave her the scrapbook at her good-bye party at Applebee's.

While dinosaurs are after Runaway and Sister Bland, their cyborg masters are after them; and a brusque, poofy-haired police detective is after all of them. The detective jails Runaway and in his cell, Runaway practices Tae Bo and has flashbacks to parts of the movie we've just seen.

Then Sister Innocuous meets with gang members she used to hang with and asks for their help. They ask why, and when she says very seriously "monsters in the hood," they don't laugh or beat her up. Runaway escapes and battles Cyborg Master Robert "Bob" Z'Dar and they kick-box the hell out of each other. (There was a fight consultant in this movie so I'm sure the filmmakers knew what they were doing.) Runaway then meets up with Sister Non-threatening and the gang, and they all go after the dinosaur monsters, who, Runaway informs them, tend to gather near water. The group goes to the reservoir and sets a bomb near the entrance. The group circles the catacombs of the reservoir...and they circle...and circle....and circle...and circle some more...and circle... Finally they find the dinosaurs and set off the bomb, killing them all. (The dinosaurs, I mean. Unfortunately, the group just barely

escapes unscathed.)

If the movie led you to believe that Runaway had killed Master Cyborg, hang on. In the last of many denouements, Sister Average is pledging her final vows on the parking ramp cum chapel set. Suddenly Master Cyborg Robert "Chip" Z'Dar comes crashing through the stained glass window, and in a rare scene without background boxes, Cyborg and Runaway fight some more. Runaway's shirt accidentally falls off him and although topless, he is able to give Robert "Bud" Z'Dar a good licking. Runaway and Sister Anne then become counselors at the halfway house, which Sister Anne also has a scrapbook of. The filmmakers knew what they were doing, I tell you.

Host Segments

Prologue: Using a computer spreadsheet program and Diane Feinstein as a baseline, Crow tries to calculate if Gypsy is once, twice, three times a lady. Gypsy is disappointed that she is only 2.7 times a lady; turns out Mike is eight times a lady.

Segment One: Pearl is conducting LSD tests on the robots and monitors their hallucinations. To augment the effect, Bobo and Brain Guy have formed an acid rock band called Narcotic Casserole. Servo has his usual delirium; Crow has a harrowing experience in which he sees a Mike eating a Snickers candy bar, not a Milky Way. Crow is also somewhat surprised to learn that Mike is not a clown.

Segment Two: Tom has made some lumpy, leaden legs for himself and desperately wants to kick-box someone. He

challenges Gypsy to a fight, but Gypsy has a singular, misshapen leg of her own and instantly takes out Servo.

Segment Three: Mike, Crow and Servo realize they've never really thanked Pearl for not killing them. They take a moment to thank Pearl, interrupting her attempt to kill them.

Segment Four: Crow is Droppy, The Water Droplet, an emissary from the National Water Council, who has come to share just a few thousand of the many uses for water.

Segment Five: Mike has a giant Robert Z'Dar-esque chin. Servo and Crow chide him for insulting the many people with giant prosthetic chins. Down in the castle, Bobo and Brain Guy inform Pearl that Narcotic Casserole is leaving to tour with Moby Grape. Pearl gives them each exploding tracking collars. You can guess the rest.

Stinger: Robert Z'Dar and Daniel Bernhardt kick-box and Bernhardt's shirt somehow slips off.

Reflections: There's a moment in this movie which is kind of heartbreaking. There's a brief scene where a television news reporter is doing a live remote stand-up. His cameraman is using a pretend cardboard camera; it's a taped-up box with a lens apparatus taped to it. That made us sad.

Not since *Change of Habit* has a single film reawakened my dream of someday becoming a nun. I think that every Catholic girl entertains notions of nundom at least once in her life, even if its only during a commercial break. I considered it a couple of times when I was in second grade,

probably because Sister Ann Patrick, my teacher at the time, seemed so darn cool. She could play that "Dominique-nique-nique" song on the guitar. Then I saw *Lilies of the Valley*: There was glamorous nunhood depicted on the big screen but then there was also Sidney Poitier and he was just so darn...well...grrrrrrrrr! The nun thing never really panned out for me.

When we wrote this last fall, we had no way of knowing that the Sci-Fi Channel wouldn't renew MST3K come March. We quipped away in blissful naiveté. We wrapped production on April 9, and just as I find myself at a career crossroads, I happen to watch *Future War* over the weekend. And there's that nun lady in *Future War*. Maybe someone's trying to tell me something...

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

Chapter 47

#1005: Blood Waters of Dr. Z

Welcome to the wacky wonderful world of Dr. Z, a bitter nutball of a scientist who lives in Florida and - what else? - oh yeah, he wants to turn himself into a giant man-fish. Why, you ask? In addition to the usual reasons people do this, Dr. Z wants to "get revenge on his friends" - at least that's how the John Prine-like folk song at the beginning of the movie explains the premise. Apparently he was denied tenure and/or permission to use humans as experimental subjects. So quite logically, he goes the giant man-fish route, intending to lead an army of squirmy walking catfish on to world conquest. Wouldn't you, if you found yourself in his position? Be honest, now.

Anyway, after some very long expositional voice-over monologues, Dr. Z - who is never identified by that name in the movie - succeeds in turning into a man-fish by stripping down to his lumpy boxer shorts and immersing himself into an indoor tank full of icky, mad-scientist treated water. The elaborate level-and-pulley system he uses to dunk himself in the water shows that he has thought this through well, and is quite serious about being a man-fish. It's not the kind of thing one should take lightly, is what the movie seems to be saying.

He succeeds in turning into a man-fish, though he seems temporarily disheartened that his dreamed-of resemblance

to a catfish wasn't achieved. These are the kind of disappointments that stop other mad scientists cold, wallowing in their own self-pity for weeks. But damn it if Dr. Z doesn't just pull himself up by his shin-fins and keep his eye on the prize, whatever that is. In no time he is swimming around mucky lagoons spraying ZaAt, a compound which will - what? Turn fish into half-men? Make them bigger, more aggressive? Give them opposable thumbs and a taste for Jeno's Pizza Rolls? You'll have to ask him. In any case, he at least seems to have prioritized his work nicely with a large paper wheel which functions as his Franklin Day Planner: Full of nice homemade graphics, notes to himself, and done in suitably large magic marker. His sketches of victims-to-be show that Dr. Z. most likely graduated from one of those matchbox art correspondence schools.

So once the spraying is done, he checks the wheel and moves on to his next two goals. First on his "to-do wheel" is to kill two former colleagues who doubted his work. Mad scientists, as you probably know, have famously thin skins and shaky ego boundaries. This murdering he does with great dispatch, though no particular elegance - just a couple of pimp slaps by his beclawed hand, and those who have wronged him go down hard. And probably a little embarrassed.

But he also wants a fish-lady queen. Yup, our man wants to spawn, baby. Hell, who doesn't? But rather than hitting Florida singles bars, where his fishy visage might not make him much of a chick magnet, he kidnaps a busty bikinied blonde and tries to make her into Mrs. Fish. Alas, he kills

her by accident. These things happen, to be sure - ask Kevin sometime about some of his similar mishaps - but from here Dr. Z is really off his game, and the to-do wheel stands in mute irony as his plans go ker-flooey.

I forgot to mention - there are other humans in this film, or at least pale simulacrums thereof. There's a redneck sheriff working with a black scientist who is almost ridiculously patient with his racist innuendo; then two other bland jumpsuited white scientists who join the hunt for Fish-Guy halfway through the movie. (Note: People who habitually wear jumpsuits are always suspect, in my book.) The white guy just rides around on the runner of a truck sticking a microphone out; the white girl almost undresses but doesn't and is eventually captured by our buddy Dr. Z as his new FishLadyQueenHoneyBabe. In the end everyone's dead or dying, especially us.

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow takes up chewing tobacco, spitting big gooey wads of it into an array of pop cans - and then, to our horror, into Mike's shoe.

Segment One: Servo accidentally drinks out of Crow's pop cans full of tobacco-ey spittle, further ruining our dinners. Down in the castle, Pearl performs an experiment in withholding love to the SOL. Servo and Mike feel no difference, but Crow panics until they get back the symbols of her love - lemon-flavored gin, hot pads, a pawn shop receipt for a shotgun, etc.

Segment Two: Crow, hiding in the rafters, taunts and

threatens Mike à la Dr. Z's voiceover monologue. Mike, trying to polish his shoes, is mostly annoyed. And then of course, as per tradition, Crow falls down.

Segment Three: Inspired by the fishing scenes in the movie, Mike and 'Bots orbit over Bass Lake, trying to catch some sunnies. Nice day for it, after all. Mike catches one and reels him waaaaaay up from Earth. Unfortunately, the fish freezes in the upper atmosphere and goes through explosive decompression. Gotta throw 'im back, yah. Yer gonna see dat.

Segment Four: Disappointed by the movie's teasing shots of women starting to take off clothes and then not doing it, Servo and Crow try to convince a skeptical Mike that any movie scene is better off with nudity. To demonstrate, they enlist Brain Guy and Bobo into performing a scene from *Glengarry Glen Ross*, starkers. Needless to say, it does not make their case.

Segment Five: Taking a cue from Dr. Z's neat, portable ZaAt cases, Servo and Crow show Mike a variety of handy plastic food carrying cases, in just the right sizes and shapes. They explain it to him long, long after he's gotten the point.

Down in Castle Forrester, Pearl has invented a Mer-Monkey, using a giant grouper, a Sawzall, and a Bobo. Seeing that Bobo now attracts lonely, rugged sailor men, she decides she will be become half-grouper herself, enter mermaidenhood, and get some old salt action.

Reflections: I had a slight fondness for this movie, not as a movie per se, of course, but as fodder for that particular

little thing we had going, many years ago. (Well, a month and a half ago, as I write this...) It seemed to have lots of the things that make for a good solid day of MST-ing: A pompous mad scientist; a ridiculous, badly costumed monster; a fat redneck sheriff; a few vapid good-looking heroes; and a nice silly theme song. At least compared to some of the others we watched for Season 10, this seemed benign.

The most memorable host segment for me, based on the experience, was Segment 4, Bobo and Brain Guy's nude scene. One technical note: It was always a challenge for our brilliant director of photography, Jeff Stonehouse, to light scenes with both Bobo and Brain Guy, as their colors were so aggressively different. After Season Eight, we made some adjustments with make-up and masks so that Brain Guy wasn't wearing clown white but a slightly more flesh-colored white; and Bobo was given a somewhat lighter face mask. So that helped. But once "nude" - what with Brain Guy's pasty torso (and for the sharp of eye, actual purple nipples - eeewwww!) and Bobo's dark full body ape suit - the challenge was back, and worse than ever. So poor Bobo was almost invisibly black.

Leaving Brain Guy all too visible. My god, I apologize! None of you did anything to deserve that. I'm so sorry.

- *Bill Corbett*

Chapter 48

#1006: Boggy Creek II: And the Legend Continues...

...And continues, and continues, and continues, until there is no joy or love left in the world. But I get ahead of myself. Here's the story:

Doc Lockhart, a professor at the University of Arkansas (which is full of "insane hog callers," according to the movie - and they mean that as a *good* thing) is a specialist in what one might call Boggy Creek Monster Studies. For years he's been tracking the legend of a large Sasquatch-like creature that inhabits the bottom lands of Arkansas. (Yeah, kiss my bottom lands, one is tempted to say. But doesn't. Sorry, I digress again in my eagerness to get to the hating of this movie.)

Anyway - multiple sightings of this beast have been reported over the years by many Arkansans, including a bland deputy sheriff, an old guy who doesn't know how to change a tire, and an intestinally active hick lawyer.

After fresh reports come in, Doc (a nickname which connotes an affection that this crabby, self-important bastard does not earn) gathers a team to go down there to investigate. His crack research staff includes his prize pupil Tanya, whose prized-ness seems to be based mostly on her

penchant or not wearing a bra; her friend Leslie, who applies makeup with a trowel and whines incessantly; and Tim, a nearly mute, constantly shirtless boy who is in real life Chuck Pierce, the son of writer/ director/producer Charles B. Pierce, who plays the loathsome Doc. Tim's state of shirtlessness might be explainable as something for the ladies if he were not basically a series of pipe cleaners connected at the top by a blonde wig - but Dad probably had a hand in the casting, I'm guessing.

As the four get deeper into Boggy Creek country, they meet progressively smellier people and have small and unthrilling encounters with the creature. Until they meet the real creature - a big, fleshy, bearded mountain man named Crenshaw, who wears nothing but stained overalls (one strap unfastened, to titillate, I suppose) and a thick, tight broccoli rubber band around his head which looks very painful. Crenshaw supposedly has some knowledge of the creature. The creepy, dyspeptic Doc finally discovers that Crenshaw is hiding a baby Boggy Creek creature in his shack, and is setting fires nightly to ward off its mother. Why? This is a subject for further studies by the Boggy Creek Monster Studies Department at that insane hog-callin' school.

And oh yeah, Doc tells a lot of stories in flashback. One is about a guy who gets so scared by the Creature he falls into the hole in his outhouse and gets his own feces all over him. Yay!

Host Segments

Prologue: The SOL starts a Cub Scout den. Crow has made a macaroni replica of Van Gogh's *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*. Servo turns up in a Brownie uniform which he got out of a discount bin. He says the uniform is much less constricting, what with his hoverskirt and all.

Segment One: On the SOL, Mike and Crow admire the noodle-based Van Gogh. Servo has now changed into his Flemish glassblower costume, which he also grabbed out of the discount bin. That Servo!

Down in Castle Forrester, Pearl has come up with an ingenious way to rule the world: Have Brain Guy cut off power to all the world's major cities, while Bobo simultaneously buys up the world's supply of potatoes - since, as many grade school science fair projects will tell you, potatoes can conduct electricity. But Bobo gets distracted from the latter task, simply buying a potato smoothie for himself at the co-op. Pearl's plans are thwarted.

Segment Two: Crow and Servo are caught in the middle of a tussle. Mike comes in, wants to know what's going on. To find out, they deploy the technique of flashbacks used to such great effect in the movie. But as Crow, then Servo, then Mike, each in turn flashes back to the fight, the memory gets hazier and more Vaseline-covered. Crow does promise, however, that his next flashback will contain a cool car chase.

Segment Three: Down in the Castle, Pearl announces that she's going to start trolling for lumpy, disposable income-disposing tourists by spreading word of the Legend of

Forrester's Swamp. The guys on the SOL immediately conclude that it is Bobo. She plays coy but employs Hank Brain Guy, Jr. to sing his haunting folk song about the Legend. It's long on intro and short on actual song.

Segment Four: Inspired for some reason by a quick shot of an old man whittling in the movie, Servo starts a whittling business, WHITLtech. But it's updated for our times: A huge factory, run efficiently and with the bottom line in mind, mass-producing small slightly pointed sticks. He also has a bunch of WHITLtech plants "overseas." Mike voices some opposition, but Servo has to leave in the middle of their talk to brutally suppress some union organizers on the factory floor.

Segment Five: Crow imitates Crenshaw from the movie, starting fires on the SOL bridge. He and Servo are playing Captive Baby Boggy Creek Creature and Big Smelly Mountain Man. But they get tired of this and go off to play Wounded Baby Unicorn and Skinny Sociopathic Janitor instead, leaving Mike with the spreading fires. Presumably, poor Mike burns to death. But it's just a show, I should really just relax.

Reflections: First, an open letter to Arkansas: For someone from Brooklyn, N.Y., I have known a disproportionate number of your native sons and daughters, in college and elsewhere. To a person they have been intelligent, creative, and unfailingly friendly and polite. I will not open the question of that randy fellow occupying the Oval Office right now. But let me say this in no uncertain terms: YOU

DO YOURSELF GRAVE HARM IN LETTING CHARLES B. PIERCE MAKE MOVIES ABOUT YOU. After seeing *Boggy Creek II*, I not only never want to visit Arkansas, I want it wiped off the map with extremely extreme prejudice. This is way over the top, but neither is it fair or decent of you to support Mr. Pierce's poisonous moviemaking IN ANY WAY. Please desist before you do irreparable damage to your fine state, if you haven't already. Thank you.

Now. My reflections: God, this one was painful! It's the kind of movie that seems to hate you; to wish you active harm; to kick sand in your eyes and make you cry. And for me, this was personified by Mr. Charles B. Pierce, who is apparently responsible for every single aspect, every nanosecond of this cruel and unusual bit of celluloid. He chose to write and play a grim, hostile, condescending, know-it-all of a man, a character who is proven superior to everyone else in the story again and again, who drills his lousy stinking voice-over narrative into our heads every freaking minute of this film, and who then has the temerity to wrap his movie up suggesting his sour Nazi of a character is really an ecological servant of God.

To Mr. Pierce: Bite every single inch of me! And do it now, and then do it again!

By comparison to the pain caused by Doc/Pierce, Crenshaw the mountain man was an urbane delight. And the poop flashback was an utterly charming Noël Coward romp.

A note about this outhouse classic, though: We had to cut a lot of it. Really. Imagine what was not there in that scene. It was there. I'm talking sound effects, grunting, and

everything. The first time we saw it we had to race each other out of the room to vomit.

I enjoyed singing and playing the gee-tar to Mary Jo's "Legend of Forrester Swamp" lyrics, which were quite hilarious and very Mary Jo-ian. And I was pleased to share the stage with editing wizard Brad Keeley as a cute little country boy, in his first appearance since playing the cute little Amish boy in *Agent for H.A.R.M*. I regret our show was cancelled (don't let them tell you otherwise, it's all spin) for many reasons, but one is that I never got to work with Brad playing other than a cute little tyke. He might have made a good psychopathic, shiv-wielding villain or something. Albeit a cute one.

Brain Guy was fully clothed throughout this show, and that was good for everyone.

- *Bill Corbett*

Chapter 49

#1007: Track of the Moon Beast

The story of a hideous monster named Paul and his love for a woman who wears terrycloth jumpers. Somewhere in the flat, uninspiring American Southwest, a dull man with hair like John Fogarty looks for fossils. His best friend, Professor Johnny Longbow, jumps out from behind a rock and introduces him to Kathy, a photojournalist who says stupid things. After enjoying a hearty bowl of Johnny's authentic Indian stew, the two fall in love and go off to find a remote place where they can be in love. They chose a place directly in the path of a meteor, which, if it strikes a human, can in some cases turn that human into a killer lizard. It strikes Paul. He turns into a killer lizard. Kathy loves him anyway, while Johnny assures him the killings aren't his fault and attempts to cure him. All cures fail, so Johnny shoots and kills him. The monster Paul is dead. Based on a true story.

Host Segments

Prologue: The Robots buy an Onion Blossomer, and as they tend to do, get carried away with it, blossoming everything on the ship. There are no references to the network television program *Blossom*.

Segment One: After blossoming Tom's head, they receive a call from Pearl, who explains her latest bit of evil - a device

hooked directly to Bobo's brain that allows the poor dumb ape to be commanded via remote control! They invite Mike to try it, and he quickly improvises a plan to escape. It fails. It had to. Mike is shamed, Bobo is punished.

Segment Two: Inspired by the hit film *Track of the Moon Beast*, Crow, Gypsy, and Servo try to scare Mike with a mask and some strange bird calls. It turns out as painfully as it did in the hit film, *Track of the Moon Beast*.

Segment Three: Mike narrates a *Legends of Rock*-style documentary about The Band That Played California Lady, a band who, in the hit film *Track of the Moon Beast*, played a song called "California Lady."

Segment Four: Crow and Servo realize that they don't know what kind of pajamas Mike favors, and so they rig an elaborate device to spy on him. Though they get an intimate glimpse of Mike's private life, they come up empty on the P. J. identification.

Segment Five: Servo injures a tiny, defenseless satellite with his bow and arrow. The satellite's large, angry mother shows up to take it home. In the castle, Observer, a.k.a. Brain Guy, helps Bobo with his new exposed Brain. They anger Pearl with their cooperation, so she puts an end to it by jabbing their brains.

Stinger: The blonde woman says "Moon rock? Oh wow!"

Reflections: *Track of the Moon Beast* was a film that was heartily recommended by Paul Chaplin, a man who, on occasion, is known to go mad and recommend terrible films to people. We said no to the film, but Paul sprayed us with a

knock-out gas of his own design, and then with another gas that wipes out short blocks of a person's memory, and while we were out, asked Sci-Fi to secure the rights to it. I think it turned out well, but it's hard to trust my own memory, as Paul's formula worked on a more general level than I think even he had planned.

I do remember laughing far more than is appropriate at Johnny Longbow's pompous demeanor and especially at his apparent pique over being asked what was in his stew. Perhaps it's best that I'm no longer a comedy writer because, when watching it months later I laughed hard at the following exchange.

Johnny Longbow: "I know what you're thinking."

Crow: "I'm boring and my slide show eats."

- *Mike Nelson*

Chapter 50

#1008: Final Justice

The story of a large sweaty man who goes to Malta to sweat.

Directed by Greydon Clark, who brought you *Joy Sticks* and *Satan's Cheerleaders*, it stars Joe Don Baker as Geronimo, a bitter, unappealing sheriff who likes to kill. Geronimo is given the task of escorting a mob boss back to his home in Malta, a job he whizzes almost immediately. He then fumbles about the tiny island yelling at people, eating, running into folks, burping, being flatulent, spitting, discharging phlegm, rubbing earwax on things, hurting feelings, soiling items, staining other things, breaking railings, tracking mud, insulting people, committing fraud, breaking dishes, being urpy, eating off other people's plates, running by the pool, swearing, kicking dogs, making kids cry, and occasionally killing - but mostly, he aggravates the Dorf-like Superintendent Mifsu. Still, we love him, because he lives large! He's the quintessential American.

Watch for the scene where he chases a man dressed like a monk...for nearly 14 hours!! Yes, it's only a 90 minute film, I don't know how they do it. I do know that chasing a monk is something we've all had to do at some time, and perhaps this is why the scene hits home for many of us.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo gives his opinions on the Yes song, "Owner of a Lonely Heart." Special emphasis is given to comparing

an owner of a lonely heart to owners of other things.

Segment One: After being plagued by the "Owner of a Lonely Heart" orchestra hit, Pearl calls and shows them the value of humor in the workplace. Bobo tries his own brand of humor and Pearl loudly and harshly shuts him down.

Segment Two: In order to mock a repeated shot in *Final Justice*, Mike and the 'Bots go to some trouble, including having Mike trip in the exact same manner, about 400 times.

Segment Three: The lovable Maltese puppet Goosio* visits the ship. The robots, thinking it's an invention of Mike's, kill it.

Segment Four: Crow goes a little funny and starts insulting the character and physical characteristics of Maltese men.

Segment Five: Having seen Joel escape right after watching the Joe Don Baker film *Mitchell*, Mike assumes it's his turn to escape. The robots have to talk him down. In the castle, Pearl and Bobo are playing funny dress-up to keep things loose. Brain Guy shows up looking very leathery and informs them that he's not dressing up, he simply has a date. Wow.

Stinger: Joe Don's signature line from the film.

Reflections: I can't tell you how delighted we were at the prospect of another Joe Don Baker film. *Mitchell* was a joy to do, and many people have told me how much they enjoyed watching our treatment of it. *Final Justice* on the other hand, was like having a knitting needle pounded slowly into your

knee-cap, and I wouldn't be surprised if people approach me after viewing it and simply slap my face indignantly, like that woman in *Jaws* did to Sheriff Brody.

As for the host segments, all went smoothly, and the only thing I can remember is that we had some new interns, sharp people, who picked up on our love for meat. We would get huge stacks of meat for breakfast! Shaved beef and turkey, spiced gently, lovingly and piled high on clean, white plates by eager and talented young men and women! I wish you could have been there. Some enterprising young Turk even took to placing a slice of meat on a bare, flat palm, spreading it with flavored cream cheese and simply rolling it up. A "meat roll-up," we'd call it.

Anyway, that's what I remember about *Final Justice*.

- *Mike Nelson*

*as seen in *Final Justice*

Chapter 51

#1009: Hamlet

Leave it to Germany to turn a bleak brooding play into an even bleaker, broodinger movie-of-the-week for German television. This thing, made in the early Sixties, has “We’re still really sorry for the war and feel terrible” all over it.

We all know the story of *Hamlet*. Hamlet, normal healthy young man home from college, avenges his father’s death by coming onto his mom, killing his buddy’s dad, driving his girlfriend to suicide, and ultimately getting suckered into a rigged duel which ends in the death of everyone in Denmark who is inbred and has any money.

Maximillian Schell, who captured all our hearts in Disney’s *The Black Hole,* plays the annoyingly existential Prince of Denmark with the kind of skill and range we’ve come to expect from the actor Sting. King Claudius dresses like M.C. Three Hundred Pound Oliver Reed and seems to have been dubbed by Ricardo Montalbán. Polonius, on the other hand, sounds like John Banner, TV’s funny Nazi butcher Sergeant Schultz. Add to this a cast of equally brooding actors, a set made of nothing but blocks of old unpainted stucco, a musical score reminiscent both of Brecht plays and cabbage farts, and you have perfect cannon fodder for a boy and his puppets.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo insists that everyone call him “Sirveaux”

from now on. Spelled different, sounds the same. Oh, and he now spells his first name “Htom.” Crow suggests that perhaps Htom could hlick him.

Segment One: Pearl has come up with a horrible world-killing mutant virus. Mike couldn’t give a rat’s ass; he wants to play three-card monte for the choice of today’s movie. Mike wins and picks as his movie *Hamlet*. Pearl pulls a SWITCHAROO on Mike and sends him the above described German turd.

Segment Two: Crow and Servo dress up as Mike’s dead dad to scare him and perhaps have a good chuckle. Turns out that Mike’s dad isn’t dead, nor are any of his relatives that they can name. Ultimately Crow and Servo yell at each other and fall over in a snappy bit of physical, um, comedy.

Segment Three: Crow and Servo rehearse their own unorthodox staging of *Hamlet*. After having tried an all-SCUBA diving version, a bucket-head version and an all-furniture version, they decide on an all-percussion version. In this way we stick it to all those pretentious bastards who want to do something different with this classic tragedy.

Segment Four: Mike dresses in full Elizabethan drag for a “nutty” game show parody called “Alas Poor WHO???” in which Tom and Crow, who play small robots who live with Mike, try to guess which celebrity an old bone comes from. Surprisingly, there isn’t a trace of irony in this funny yet series-canceling sketch.

Segment Five: The ‘Bots, as they usually do when they like a character, have made an action figure of Hamlet. It talks and has a string you pull. A really long string. I mean a

REALLLLLY long string, because it talks a lot. In the castle, Pearl and Co. are visited by Fortinbras, a character from the end of *Hamlet*, who is outraged that he was excluded from this version of *Hamlet*. Pearl calmly pours poison in his ear and kills him. Ultimately, Mike lets go of the very long string from the Hamlet doll, and we hear the entire "to be or not to be" soliloquy.

Reflections: We very much looked forward to doing this movie. It seems easy to do Shakespeare badly, as this thing proves. And then we found ourselves with the task to cut this three-hour-plus production down to our required time of a little more than eighty minutes. Although we found some relief in the fact that his play is astoundingly overwritten, it did give me pause to think that we could be making a bad production worse by chopping it. This turned out to be untrue. Bottom line is, not even that lipless yet talented Kenneth Branagh was able to get it right. But I did feel this sense of import, as if we should do sketches and jokes that were somehow more intelligent, more up to the raw material which is Shakespearean verse at its best, full of hidden meanings and outright puns and dirty jokes and strikingly compact metaphors and sheer marvels of language. However my colleagues calmed me down and came to remind me that we can't really break the play, can't even hurt it. The Germans already tried and yet I still love the thing, long and wordy as it is. So go ahead and try your own clown makeup version of Hamlet. It'll be around long after you croak. Not the clown makeup, the play.

- *Kevin Murphy*

IT
Lives By Night
© COPYRIGHT MCMLXXIV
AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES INC. AND CHARLES EMBRY
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
SciFi

Chapter 52

#1010: It Lives By Night

A bat-loving bat-ologist named Johnny is on his honeymoon and convinces his fresh spouse to forget sex and go caving instead. In the cave, the batologist gets bitten by a bat and goes, well, bat-shit. (It's really the clearest, most concise description.) Ignoring the fact that he was bitten by a fruit bat, he becomes a vampire, *eine Nosferatu*. *Wampyre*. The living dead. The hooch. The freshy-freshy.

Concerned with his bout of battiness, the couple pause in their ski holiday honeymoon to visit Doctor Groovy W. Ski-Bum, the Seventiest person of the entire Seventies. He starts the rabies series on Johnny but it just aggravates his bat-shittiness. So poor Johnny goes on the obligatory killing spree, as his wire-thin wife first denies he has a problem then kind of accepts it.

Meanwhile, the town has a sheriff. And God is he annoying. He makes Jackie Gleason in *Smokey and the Bandit* look nuanced. His voice can strip wallpaper, and he's a perv. Ultimately, Johnny becomes some sort of ape-dog, his wife kills the sheriff and the couple live happily in a cave. There is no hero, no real plot to speak of, and no need to think; just sit back and enjoy as the stupidity rolls over you like the surf on a Mexican beach.

Host Segments

Prologue: It's painting day on the SOL. They're gonna

spruce up the galley and the companionways and the can. Can really needs it. Mike shows the 'Bots giant paint chips to see how they affect them. Crow just wants to date Lisa Stansfield, no matter the color. Eggshell makes them panic. The end.

Segment One: Pearl sprays Mike and the 'Bots with certified government poisons and refuses to admit it. Mike and the 'Bots whine until she sends antidotes. In short, they create a little playlet about government security policy in the Cold War era.

Segment Two: Crow dresses like Mary Tyler Moore in order to make the point that he looks more (moore?) like Mary than the woman in the movie does. Crow is so adamant that he makes Mike dress like Ted Baxter and Servo like Lou Grant and they put on a lame "Mary" sketch. Mike and Servo refuse to call Crow Mary, as they ought, and Crow leaves in a huff, none the wiser. I like to call this sketch "Mary Tyler MOORE'S Last Sigh." Heh.

Segment Three: The 'Bots find Mike passed out with foamy whiteness surrounding his mouth. The 'Bots rashly assume he was rabid, and stick him full of hypos. Actually, Mike has fallen asleep while eating a cream puff. They have a rich laugh and continue the injections.

Segment Four: Mike puts on a mustache, a bushy one like Dr. Groovy on the film. He calls Pearl to see how a woman might like it. She says it's okay. Suddenly Crow appears with a gigantic, ridiculously bushy mustache. Pearl goes wild for him. Mike leaves in a tizzy, and Servo Appears in a Yosemite Sam-size 'stache. He tips over and drops like a

tree.

Segment Five: Inspired by the bum in the movie, Servo gets a kit from the Buddy Ebsen Hat Distressing Corporation, making nice hats suitable for bums for decades. Turns out he paid twenty grand for a bag of dirt. Meanwhile Pearl has trapped Bobo and Brain Guy in the castle showing them slides of the various honeymoons she's had, with husbands who all died under suspicious circumstances.

Stinger: Batty Johnny says "Well?" and goes batty.

Reflections: For those of us my age, and you know who you are, there is a style of filming which is unmistakably TV Movie Style, either from Universal or American International. Maybe it's the irrepressibly bad acting, or the up-to-the minute clothing and hair styles which date the film in an instant, unwittingly providing us with a valuable service. Or maybe it's the squat title graphics, the giant cars, the Flockhartian thinness of the actresses, the lack of anyone likable in the films, or the fact that they seem to have been written and produced in about an hour. But they remind me of those nights when my dad would fall asleep in front of the TV with his chin tucked in his turtleneck, snoring with apnea, waiting for Johnny to start. So a painful thing evokes a rather fond memory, sort of like an infectious disease or a broken limb can remind you of a gentler time. So, bring me more David Hartman and Tony Musante films. I can take 'em.

- *Kevin Murphy*

Chapter 53

#1011: Horrors of Spider Island

Large, rectangular Gary, lovely assistant Georgia, and slightly less lovely assistant Mike audition dancers for a trip to Singapore. This takes up approximately the first two-thirds of the movie, and culminates in the labored explanation of a joke: When Gary likes a dancer, he crosses his legs; when he doesn't, he uncrosses them. That's how Georgia knows his answers, without Gary even saying anything, and that's why Mike was confused. (Did I say joke?)

Anyway, after several months of that scene Gary wings off to Singapore with dancers May, Gladys, Doreen, Linda, Nellie, the frightening Babs, and Georgia, and before you can say Jack Robinson, provided you say it very slowly, they crash into the ocean and wash ashore on an island. Gary carries the dancers ashore, actually, and assumes his natural role as pompous male, as the dancers run around murmuring - all except Georgia, who what with her efficiency and general air of competence is just damn lucky she's not a man. They all run across a cabin, and there they find a dead fellow in a spider web! So maybe there are some spiders in this thing, after all! But isn't it almost over?

No, it's not. Pay attention. The dead guy is Professor Green, and a quick reference to uranium in his diary is all the explanation we ever receive for the confusing events about

to unfold. All move in to his cabin, and the dancers begin disrobing, writhing, taking showers, and rubbing their hands across Gary's crotch. Caught by Georgia while kissing a dancer, Gary stalks off and is attacked by a large puppet spider.

Let's speed this up. The women go out looking for Gary, can't find him. Two sailors, Joe and Bob, show up to pick up Professor Green, and you can imagine their chagrin when they find, instead of the professor, a cabin full of exotic dancers. There follows a couple days of drinking and sex, as they await a ship's arrival; there's some vague disagreement between Joe and Bob about Bob's dismissive attitude toward women, which offends Joe since he's taken with Ann (from Minnesota!). Gary reappears, apparently now a spider although he's just a guy in slacks, and kills Bob and Bob's special honey Gladys, and the women all get torches and chase Gary into a swamp and the ship comes. The end.

So, are the big spiders because of the uranium? Is Gary's transformation into whatever caused by the uranium? Just what exactly are the horrors of this place? Does anyone know? Hello?

Host Segments

Prologue: Crow has a syndicated newspapers column, inspired by Larry King's pointless ramblings in USA Today: "I give Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia a B+!"

Segment One: The Castle is gone - actually, it's just moved, to a suburban setting somewhere: Pearl is tired of shelling out fifty bucks a year for Bobo's license. Brain Guy's crabby

about all the work, but Bobo likes his huge new tag. He barks at the neighbor's dogs, though.

Segment Two: Mike gets stuck in a web, like the professor in a movie; Crow and Servo made it and are delighted with the big bug they catch for dinner. A huge spider threatens Mike, though. Do the 'Bots care? No. Sometimes you have to wonder about those guys.

Segment Three: Mike, his feet on the desk like Gary, auditions all in the castle, who (of course) buy into it immediately. Bobo tries soft shoe; Brain Guy dons a wig and imitates a steamy scene from *Flashdance*; Pearl tries a ballet and falls over.

Segment Four: Crow: "So Mike, if you're a woman and you're in a plane crash, you instantly become languid, helpless, sex-starved, and you murmur a lot?" They test the premise - turns out you do.

Segment Five: Mike becomes an unconvincing spider; all share a way-too-hearty laugh when it turns out he's planning to make a Braunschweiger melt, just like the 'Bots. Pearl and company are moving the castle back, and are at a truck stop, where Bobo discovers a machine purveying individually wrapped balloons.

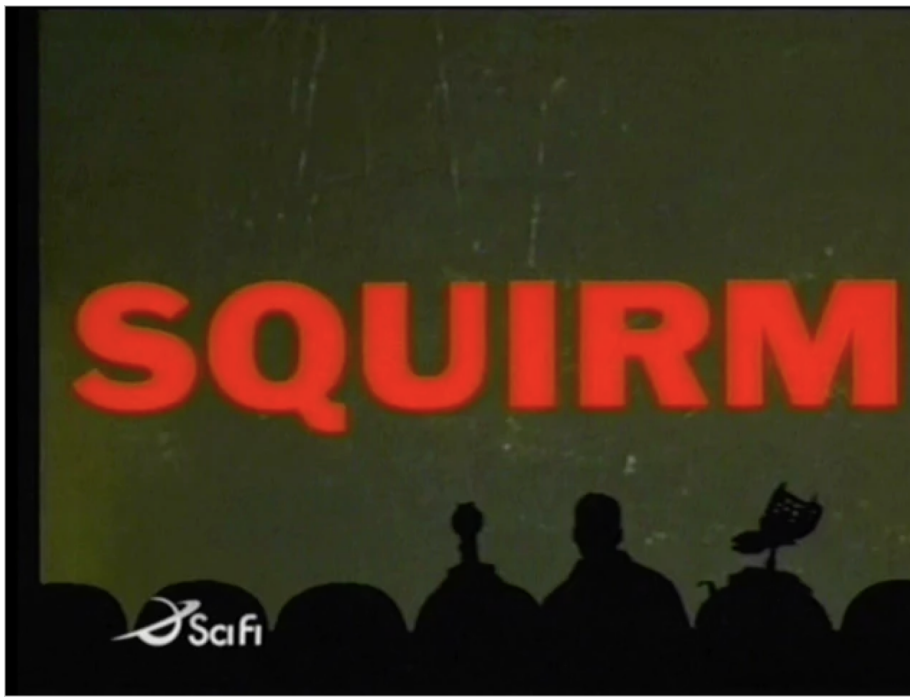
Stinger: The plane plummeting, the dancers screaming.

Reflections: We learned, I forget just how, that this movie was a cooperative effort between Germany (West Germany, I assume) and Yugoslavia in the early 1960s. Believe me, I tried like the dickens to provide a joke about the Marshall Plan - that this was how our U.S. tax money was being used

by the good people of Europe, as they attempted to rebuild their economies, and such. To all you Marshall Plan fans out there, I'm sorry.

The weekend after we finished this, I was consumed by curiosity and used all my frequent flyer miles to fly to Singapore - it sounded like such a swinging town! And I was not disappointed. I hooked up with Babs, of course, and we had a great time, and then she decided to fly back to the States with me - and that's when tragedy struck. We crashed, and I had to depend on Babs to carry me ashore on an island, and take care of me, with her commanding manner. We're still there, in fact, me and Babs. You get used to it after a while. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing going on.

- *Paul Chaplin*



Chapter 54

#1012: Squirm

Short Summary (*A Case of Spring Fever*): A delightful and very instructive little filmlet about the danger of dissing springs. A froglike middle-aged man, thwarted repeatedly in an attempt to fix a couch because of its springs - and therefore missing his golf game - cries to the very heavens, wishing that springs that never been invented. He has no idea of the gravity of this invocation. God opens a can of omnipotent whoop-ass on the unsuspecting man, sending his archangel Coily, the "spring sprite." Coily is an elfin fiend with a single sharp fang and the voice of a cartoon hillbilly grandpa. He tells Mr. Froggy that all right, he's got his wish, there are no more springs in the world. And just like that, they're gone. Coily, he can do magic things.

Mr. Froggy accepts this in stride, merely happy that he can now make his golf foursome. He never questions the whole order of the universe, in which there are apparently many small elf-devils who guard the integrity of certain very, very specific areas of creation. Or the perhaps even more bizarre alternative: That there is no God, there is no divinity, no order to things - there is only Coily, and he is all-powerful, but for some reason he will never explain to us, all he cares about is springs and their reputation.

However, Coily goes on to show our lumpen hero the many reasons why springs are so vital in his life. Seems you can't do anything at all, truly not a blessed thing, without springs. Our man gets the message and begs Coily to restore the

world's springs. Coily does it grudgingly, but the whole experience causes a massive conversion in Man-Frog: He becomes a zealot and spreads the Gospel of Springs to his golf buddies, prattling on non-stop during their game and their ride home about unbelievable importance of springs. Unfortunately, this list of spring facts (e.g., springs make your liver run properly, cows couldn't give milk without springs, the name "Buddha" originally meant "chubby enlightened spring") constitutes about 90% of this short, leaving the fascinating Coily behind.

Movie summary: Hmm? What's that you say? Season 10 hasn't provided you with nearly enough movies set in the South? Well, we here at MST3K heard your complaints and happily offer *Squirm*, another movie about the wacky ways of Southern people!

Oh, and worms too. Lots of 'em.

A huge storm hits the town of Fly Creek, Georgia, downing power lines and electrifying its worms. Other worms might simply die from the shock, but these plucky Fly Creek worms become super-vicious and highly organized instead. And if that wasn't bad enough, a REAL horror - a pasty, annoying antique dealer from up North - visits the town to see his friend, an unbelievably Southern woman, another antique dealer. He has the hots for her, it seems, but his attention towards that and some extreme antiquing they'd planned is redirected once the wormies start to pop up. He becomes Nancy Drew and starts trying to solve the mystery of why so many of the townspeople seem to have been

stripped of their flesh lately.

By the end, the whole dang town is swimming in animated vermicelli. And the filmmakers' use of millipedes and centipedes as worms gives this otherwise fine, credible, beautifully acted movie its only flaw, besides its thousands of others.

Host Segments

Prologue: Mike and the 'Bots help Mike with the annual SOL safety check. Turns out Servo and Crow's various playful uses of the SOL's safety equipment have made the place into quite the little deathtrap!

Segment One: The fun safety check continues! But in a shocking development never seen before on MST3K, they are interrupted by Pearl calling. Down in Castle Forrester, Pearl is throwing the first annual Castle Forrester Fair! Her plan: To take over the world by swallowing up progressively larger fairs, culminating in the World's Fair!...and from there, of course, the world itself is just a tiny step. Classic Pearlian logic. She shows off the various wares and entertainments, including the evening's grandstand act: An authentic cardboard replica of Mr. Ben Murphy himself! She asks what the SOL is contributing to the fair.

Mike is at a loss until Servo and Crow haul in their prize 5000-pound pig, Winston. Mike hasn't noticed they've been raising him all this time.

Segment Two: Mike and the 'Bots contemplate the cosmology of Coily, the spring sprite: Is there a hellish sprite for every object in the universe? Crow tests this, wishing

that there were no Mikes in the world. Sure 'nough, they get a visit from Mikey, the Mike sprite!

Segment Three: Servo has overdosed on Southern-ness and has become afflicted with Severe Southern Belleness. He's coquettish and flirty and waaaay south of the Mason-Dixon. Mike and Crow try to cure him by applying Yankee behavior modification, including Pepperidge Farm bread, a picture of George Steinbrenner, and pastrami injections.

Segment Four: Mike tries an experiment in creating an army of giant mutant killer worms. He fails. But he comes up with a brilliant (and quick!) way of making delicious fried worm snacks.

Segment Five: Crow dresses up as the lanky sister from the movie, with her very high platform shoes. All we can see is the platform of said shoes, however. And, being as it's Crow, and being as how he's up high, he of course falls, screaming as he goes. (Sing à la Topol:) Tradi-tion!

Back down at the Castle, Pearl is eager to demonstrate her newest addition to the fair, the bungee jump. Rather, she is eager to have Brain Guy demonstrate it. The problem: Too much bungee and not enough jump. Brain Guy is pushed off the platform to an awkward fall, and then scooped up to be pushed off again before he knows what hit him. This is the show which should have proved definitely to Brain Guy that he does indeed have a body: He takes a real beating here in Episode #1012.

Stinger: Worm-face guy, with a brilliant riposte: "You gon' be da worm face!"

Reflections: Ahh, shorts. Wonderful, delicious, nutritious shorts. Available in so many colors and sizes; so cool and aerating in the summertime...

Excuse me, got distracted. I meant film shorts. These were always some of my favorite 'Bot fodder as an MST fan in the days of yore. I'd always wished we could do more of them while I was on the show. However, a little gem like *Spring Fever* almost makes up for it. Granted, it devolves into a painful few last minutes of our amphibious protagonist simply yakking non-stop about the virtues of springs. But that is all worth it for our time with the small but great god Coily, defender of springs.

A bit of MSTory: This short was considered a bunch of times for the show, going way back. Those of you who've been watching the show for a while may remember Episode #317, *Viking Women and the Sea Serpent*, with its many waffle-based sketches. Segment 4 of that show was actually based on *A Case Of Spring Fever*: Servo ponders whether the world might not be a better place without waffles, and Crow as a waffle sprite of sorts shows him just how wrong he is. The short itself was never used, but it did inspire this waffle-y version.

Patrick Brantseg, who is far too modest about his considerable performing ability, was quite brilliant as the voice of Coily/Mikey, and kept us way entertained with it all week. Then we had to tell him to stop.

Regarding *Squirm*: As I may have already let on, the thought of yet another movie based in the South, and the attendant riffs thereon, had me depressed when we started work on

this - especially since we were quite aware of this being our penultimate show. But the worms provided at least a slightly new take, and the absence of Charles B. Pierce was a break as well.

One somewhat personal fact: The movie's "star" - if such a term could ever be applied to anyone in this movie - was Don Scardino, who was also in the family film *Cruising* with Al Pacino, something called *He Knows You're Alone* in 1980 with a young, pre-iconic Tom Hanks; and who has in recent years also directed lots of prime-time TV such as *Law and Order* and *Tracey Takes On*. He also spent some time as the artistic director of Playwrights' Horizons Theater in N.Y., which has rejected a good many of my plays. So - ha, Don Scardino! I made fun of your dumb worm movie!...is what I guess I have to say. So...there? I guess? (Hmm, that didn't feel as satisfying as I'd hoped...)

This is is my last bit of website fun. I want to thank you all for watching the show and supporting MST3K all these years. I was a very, very lucky man to have such a great job for a while. Sending out my best wishes to you all, and to my amazingly cool former comrades at Best Brains. And and the years roll by, my fellow sojourners, if you remember nothing else, I urge you to ponder this question posed by Buckingham: "Won't you lay me down in the tall grass and let me do my stuff?"

Won't you, won't you?

Thank you, friends.

- *Bill Corbett*

Chapter 55

#1013: Diabolik

Also known as *Danger: Diabolik*, but there's neither danger nor diabolic in this film based on a popular Italian comic book. The lovely Diabolik is a master thief who dresses in form-fitting black vinyl, a slick hedonist who likes to make big heists and foil the government. John Phillip Law, whom you'll remember from *Space Mutiny* and, just to name a few of the two movies he's been in, is *Diabolik*. Diabolik has a really cool underground lair, a really cool car, and a foxy lady named Eva who employs all the wig technology available to her. Eva and Diabolik have a deep and abiding love based on trust, a shared history, and shared goals for the future, as is evidenced by them rolling around naked in a pile of greenbacks.

When Diabolik purloins ten million dollars from the government of the unnamed but Europey country, Inspector Jenko is fed up to here. Meanwhile, in a triangulation of arch-nemeses, the ham-faced Valmont's nightclubs are raided by the government. So Valmont makes a deal with Jenko: Valmont promises to get Diabolik to Jenko if Jenko's agents will back off Valmont. This will be difficult, Valmont points out, because no-one's ever seen Diabolik. Evidently no-one has ever noticed the reed-thin, pretty man in the vinyl leotard as he flits from caper to caper.

Then Eva, whose love for Diabolik is not based on material gain, demands an emerald necklace for her birthday which just happens to be the most famous jewels in the world.

Knowing Diabolik can't resist heisting the jewels, both Jenko and Valmont plan to ensnare Diabolik. (Why won't somebody come up with a plan to steal Jewel?) During their no doubt daring but unseen escape, Eva injures herself. She goes to the doctor where she is kidnapped by Valmont, who knows that Diabolik will do anything to rescue her because their sex, I mean their love, is true and abiding.

So Valmont holds Eva for $10 million ransom. Long story short, Diabolik finds Eva and in a standoff in the desert, Jenko thinks they've killed Diabolik but AHA! He's only playing dead with the help of a drug.

Later, when the two of them get out of that fix, Diabolik sets out to steal twenty tons of gold which Jenko has made into one huge ingot so Diabolik won't be able to steal it. Oh, please. I mean, come on! This is Diabolik we're talking about! The Master of Ineffectual Disguises! The giant ingot is transported by miniature train which is blown up as it's crossing a trestle. It sinks to the bottom of the ocean, and Diabolik and Eva retrieve it with his super cool underwater car. They take the gold to the hideout where Diabolik melts it to make regular size ingots. Meanwhile, Jenko and his men are able to track Diabolik because they put a tracer in the gold. The G-men swarm the hideout and when the device that was melting the gold explodes, it encases Diabolik head to toe in gold. Diabolik, though immobilized, laughs triumphantly though it's anybody's guess why, since he's encased in gold and there's no-one around to feed him, scratch his nose, or help him go to the bathroom.

Host Segments

Prologue: Servo can't maintain altitude and Mike discovers an SOL Employee Handbook jammed up his hoverskirt. The handbook is written in Pearl's autocratic style.

Segment One: The ship starts to yaw and Mike and the 'Bots find Pearl in a playful mood, messing with them with the use of her new joystick. The joystick breaks and accidentally sends the SOL headed back to Earth. Down in the castle, Pearl is slightly upset; up in the SOL, Crow has motion sickness.

Segment Two: Mike is packed, rice and all, and ready to go. Crow's got all his stuff in a garbage bag; and Tom is trying to figure out what to do with all the extra Toms around the ship.

Segment Three: The residents of the Castle are getting on with their lives: Pearl has accepted an offer to be dictator for life of Qatar; Bobo has a promising interview at the zoo; and Brain Guy's got lots of stuff going on.

Segment Four: Crow is frightened to go to Earth, what with all the wars and murders and diseases and Adam Sandlers running around. Mike sings a song to allay his fears, which perks up Crow but scares Servo into hiding under the desk.

Segment Five: With Servo driving, the SOL endures a violent landing on Earth. Mike, Crow, and Servo share a one-bedroom, garden level apartment and settle in to watch movies.

Stinger: Valmont looking to sea, asking "Is that stud coming?"

Reflections: This was our last show ever for *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. We all knew this day would come and to tell you the truth, it was time. MST3K had existed ten years, which is a very long life for a television show, and I had been with the show for seven years, which was longer than all my previous jobs put together.

We didn't really care for the movie itself, *Diabolik*, and it was difficult to write. Whether any movie would have been hard for our last show or if it truly wasn't good for our purposes, I don't know. We rolled around a lot of ideas for the last show, and we grappled with how to wrap it all up. One thing we adamantly agreed on: Nothing maudlin. Although we did toy with the idea of Pam Ewing waking up and realizing it had all been a dream.

A few weeks before the end of production, I was telling my brothers how we were going to end the series, and when I told them about Crow and Servo getting an apartment with Mike, I started to cry just a little. Then I had to laugh at myself, because I talking about not just about fictional characters, but puppets, for cripes' sake! It really hit me when I uttered the last line of the last scene to be shot. "Look, Nelson - move on. I am."

Once we got a good take, Peter Rudrud called "That's a wrap," and there were tears from just about everyone. But I have moved on: I have secreted myself away in my apartment, somehow I've acquired 46 cats, I wear three housedresses at once, and I hold one-sided conversations with people I see from my window who don't know I'm

watching them. Life after MST3K does go on! As for the others, well, we all still keep in touch, even if it is through restraining orders and menacing personal ads.

All in all, we had the time of our lives.

- *Mary Jo Pehl*

An Open Letter To Shareholders From Bill Corbett: What I remember most about our last show is Patrick running around in a full body black rubber suit which showed only his eyes, stealing all our jewelry, laughing a faux-evil-guy laugh at very inappropriate times, and throwing knives at us, which got a bit annoying...

Oh wait, that was the movie.

For me, the last show was a combination of almost unbearable sadness, mixed with real exhilaration and great fun. I was aware that something special was ending, but that also made our time together on Episode #1013 all the sweeter. It reminded me what a wonderful, funny, intelligent, and warm group of people I got to work with for three years. They'll always be close to my heart. Which will, needless to say, go on.

Patrick Brantseg Sez: All's I'm gonna say is that it was wonderful working with such talented people whom I consider friends. There, now all you bastards owe me lunch!

And Now A Word From Paul Chaplin: Mary Jo said the website is interested in comments from all of us on the last

movie, but unfortunately it's been three months and I really can't remember anything about it. She tells me it was called *Diabolik*, which certainly sounds like a bad movie, so I feel I'm safe in assuring you that it was the worst movie we ever did. Can't recall a single detail, though. Weren't there some bad guys or something?

You may have heard any of us say, previously, that we always forgot almost everything about the movie we had just finished as soon as we completed it. You probably thought it was an exaggeration, but it was not. I think it's some kind of automatic protective thing, a defense contrivance embedded somewhere in human DNA: When exposed to a real bad movie, forget it quickly. The implications are tremendous, of course; it would mean that humans evolved as part of a larger whole, a super-consciousness if you will, a truly universal awareness that this species, this fascinating, intelligent, baffling, enraging creature known as Homo sapiens would, at some point in the dim future, make some extraordinarily bad movies, and would need to be protected from them.

Or take it a step further: Is it possible that this cosmic energy, or all-knowing force - call it God, if you must - planned even for the emergence of a handful of the species who would be called upon to do nothing but watch these movies? That the human gene pool contains a protective strand of material meant just for us who wrote for MST? A strand producing a particular kind of forgetfulness?
Makes you think.

Well, I gotta go. I'm driving up to Milles Lacs to a condo development, where I have to sit through a presentation on

timeshares before I can pick up my “new, high-tech TV.” I’m going on a weekday, so I also get a “deluxe 35-mm camera (with carrying case).” I had no idea what I was missing, going to work every day like I used to do.